

Bloodlust

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by [libbywednesday](#)

Summary

After a strange encounter, Kyle ends up a vampire and, through a twist of fate, he finds himself in an unusual symbiotic relationship with Cartman. It's unsustainable, though, and Kyle is forced to accept the fact that he'll need to regularly kill to survive. Cartman has a plan, however, and the two of them form an unlikely duo and, together, they hunt down and kill deviants such as pedophiles, sexual predators, and neo-Nazis.

It's the Beginning and the End

The taste of blood was salty and metallic but, to Kyle, it was sweet and rich. It was thick and almost sticky and coated his mouth and throat in a velvety film. He thought he might never be able to get his fill. And, if the hand yanking him firmly by the hair was any indication, he assumed he must have been taking a bit too much, although, he was far too frenzied to stop of his own accord. The tug on his hair became more forceful, though, and pulled him back. His lips curled into a snarl and he hissed, involuntarily, in retaliation. It was a low, guttural sound, almost like a growl. It was emphatically inhuman and it frightened even himself.

"That's enough," Cartman said in a gruff whisper, fist still bunched up in Kyle's fiery curls, watching his wide, dilated pupils and staring at his red lips as they dribbled deep crimson.

But it wasn't enough and he knew it. They both did. They were going to need another option.

ONE MONTH EARLIER...

Kyle stretched and yawned as his eyes hit the bright fluorescence of the cinema lobby lights. It was late on a Friday night and he and his friends had just caught the ten PM showing of the latest paranormal horror movie. Like usual, it didn't suck but it wasn't anything to write home about. Friday night late movies were a monthly tradition for them, though. Usually horror now that they were all eighteen and could get into an R rated film, unless there happened to be another movie coming out that looked either particularly good or particularly terrible. Sometimes they stuck around for a double feature in the summertime but it was only mid April of their senior year of high school and it had been a long day.

Kyle took the last sip of watered down Dr. Pepper from his plastic cup and tossed it in the trash and snickered to himself as Kenny managed to flick a stray piece of popcorn into the back of Cartman's jacket hood without him noticing. He really enjoyed these evenings, he had to admit to himself. Even if he wasn't the biggest horror movie fan and even if Cartman was there. Although, they could get along rather well most of the time these days. Much to his own chagrin and to the surprise of almost everyone.

"Anybody up for some pool?" asked Stan, meandering into the tiny adjacent arcade off of the lobby. He dug for quarters in the pocket of his dark jeans. He came up with two and looked expectantly at Kyle, Kenny, and Cartman for a third.

Cartman rolled his eyes and flipped him one with his thumb. He leaned down and rested on the edge of the pool table on his forearms as Stan positioned the coins in the slot and pushed it in with a satisfying clunk, followed by the clatter of billiard balls rolling into the table reservoir.

"You can go first," said Cartman, hiding a smirk. "I'll give you a head start since I'm gonna completely own you here in a minute." He heaved himself up off the rail and took a wooden cue in each hand from the nearby stand, eyeing them up next to each other and handing Stan whichever one he found less acceptable.

Stan racked up the pool balls with the triangle, giving them a quick shake for good measure, and lined up his shot, hitting the cue ball and sending the rest careening across the emerald felt with a loud clack, potting the eleven and fifteen.

"Fuck you," Cartman said, folding his arms around his cue stick. "Stripes are gay."

"I mean, if you say so," Stan said, quirking an eyebrow, lining up for his next shot.

Kyle leaned back against the wall, crossing his arms and watching with amusement. He caught Kenny out of the corner of his eye, making his way over to the arcade games and he followed suit, leaving Stan and Cartman to their match.

The games were all old and borderline decrepit since South Park Cinemas didn't get a lot of traffic, but they were still in decent working order. Kenny popped a quarter into a time-worn Ms. Pac-Man game.

"Did you know that Ms. Pac-Man actually started out as a mod made by a couple of random guys before Atari bought the rights from them and made it into an actual game?" Kyle said, leaning against the cabinet next to him. He had an astounding knowledge of trivia that pretty much nobody ever cared about.

"Damn, you could just do whatever in the eighties, huh?" Kenny said, not taking his eyes off the screen as he guided Ms. Pac-Man around her pixelated maze. "I wish it was still that way today. Imagine Todd Howard buying the rights to some Skyrim sex mod."

Kyle snorted. "Are you insinuating that Ms. Pac-Man is a sex symbol?"

Kenny shrugged. "I'm sure somebody out there wants to fuck her."

Kyle watched as Kenny tore his way through the first level with ease. He looked awfully focused, with his tongue peeking slightly out from his pursed lips, pausing only between levels to flick sandy blonde hair out of his warm brown eyes.

He considered playing a game of Galaga but was distracted by Cartman and Stan bickering across the room. He turned back, more entertained by the ruckus than he would be by any retro game cabinet in the arcade, and loped towards them again, coming up behind Cartman as he lined up his shot and bumping into the back of his cue with his shoulder, causing him to miss entirely.

"Oops," Kyle said, feigning innocence but raising his eyebrows slightly.

"You fucking Jew," Cartman growled, kicking at him from behind with his Timberland boots.

Kyle chuckled and dodged and sat down on the nearby bench as Cartman repositioned himself. He gave his shot another try, surprisingly skillfully, sinking two balls on opposite

sides of the table.

"Eat that, Marsh," he said, boastfully, flashing a dimpled grin. He lined up again and promptly potted the five ball. Unfortunately, it also bumped into the eight ball and knocked it into the pocket, effectively ending the game. "Goddammit!" Cartman shouted. He tossed his cue stick at the ground and it aptly bounced back up and hit him right in the crotch. He let out a loud wheeze of pain and fell to his knees as his friends laughed uproariously at him. Even Kenny had abandoned his game and doubled over in laughter at his demise.

"Serves you right, Fatass!" Kyle cackled.

"You're such a sore loser," Stan chided with a snicker, rolling the remaining balls back into the pocket and hanging the cues on the rack.

"You're laughing. My dreams of having children someday are shattered and you're laughing," Cartman groaned, gripping the edge of the pool table to haul himself back up to his feet, unsteadily.

"Yeah, right," Kyle said, standing as well. "Who's gonna want to have your kids anyhow?"

"Fuck off," said Cartman, leaning on the pool table, stuffing his hands in the pockets of the dark red hoodie under his black leather jacket. "At least I have a prom date which is more than you can say."

Kyle scowled. "For your information, I have a prom date!"

"Oh yeah? Who?" Cartman said, skeptically, giving him a bored, heavy-lidded glance.

"Don't worry about it," Kyle grumbled, rolling his eyes and turning away.

"He's going with Bebe Stevens," Kenny said, appearing next to him with a wide, gap-toothed grin.

"Oh god, Kyle's gonna smash," Cartman exclaimed, shaking his head.

"Shut the fuck up. We're just going as friends," said Kyle, folding his arms across his chest as his cheeks pinked a little bit.

"Queer," Cartman scoffed.

Kyle's cheeks flushed more and he made a move towards where Cartman was standing but Stan body blocked him effortlessly as if it were just second nature at that point.

"Come on, guys," Stan said, assuming his habitual position as leader of their friend group. It came pretty instinctively to him by then. Cartman was a natural leader but he always advocated for the wrong kinds of things, Kenny couldn't care less, and Kyle was probably the most responsible of the four of them but his temper made it impossible to get things done with him. Stan was the only reasonable choice left. "It's getting late and we should go."

"We should go to Taco Bell first," Cartman suggested, bouncing up on his tiptoes.

"I'm not walking all the way to Taco Bell," Kyle said, flatly. Stan or Cartman usually drove on their outings but it was a mild evening and they had decided to walk this time.

"You're such a buzzkill," Cartman whined as he followed Stan out of the arcade area and back into the lobby, shuffling his boots on the funky Art Deco patterned carpet.

Kyle exhaled forcefully through his nose as they headed for the door. He pulled his green canvas jacket closer around his shoulders and tugged his pale gray beanie down over his ears before they stepped out into the night.

Cartman pretended to hold the door for him but let it slam in his face at the last second. He let out a bubbly laugh as Kyle pushed through with a scowl. Kyle elbowed him hard in the ribs and Cartman let out an offended cry, grabbing him in a headlock, hauling him forward with him as they walked through the dark parking lot.

"You fucking bastard," Kyle grunted, struggling against Cartman's thick arms. It didn't help that Cartman was a good four inches taller than him and just bigger all around. Cartman was the tallest of their friend group with Stan coming in next followed by Kyle and then Kenny.

"Say uncle," Cartman commanded, looking down at Kyle with a wry grin as he tried to wrestle out of his grip.

"Not on your life," Kyle hissed. He chomped down on the fleshy part of Cartman's thumb with his teeth and Cartman recoiled immediately.

"You bit me! He bit me!" he shouted in disbelief, rubbing his sore hand, clutching it close to his chest.

Kyle spit on the ground. "Maybe you won't do that again, you fat fuck!" he exclaimed.

Stan laughed, slipping his hands into the sheepskin-lined pockets of his denim jacket, hiding them from the briskness of the night. It was cooler then than it was earlier when they decided to walk to the theater. With the sun down the damp, spring air was almost frigid. The yellow moon overhead was round and full and it illuminated the small patches of melting snow along the edges of the sidewalk like a glowing path. A light fog had begun to settle along the ground as well, making the pavement look oddly filmy.

Kenny flipped up the hood of his orange hoodie and zipped the black parka he had on over it up halfway. "It's cold as balls," he said, breaking the silence of four friends stumbling home in the dead of night. "And it's spooky out here," he added for good measure.

Cartman scoffed. "Pussy," he said, purposefully nudging him with his elbow.

"I'm serious," Kenny said, shrugging his shoulders and gesturing up at the sky. "That's like a werewolf moon."

Kyle broke into a laugh at the idea. "A werewolf moon?"

Even Kenny giggled at his own ridiculousness, albeit a bit nervously. "Yeah, like Halloween shit."

"It's April," Stan snorted.

"What? You think werewolves only come out in October?" Kenny objected, rubbing his hands together to keep them warm. "Come on, dude."

"Bold of you to assume werewolves exist in the first place," said Cartman, rolling his eyes.

"Bold of you to assume they don't!" countered Kenny.

Kyle shook his head but still noted that the strange, hazy moonlight cast an eerie atmosphere over them as they shuffled along the wet, shimmering asphalt as they crossed the parking lot.

This was the way they always took when they came home from the movies, through the parking lot and around the back of the local retail district. It shaved about fifteen minutes off of their walk back to the area they lived but at the cost of it being really seedy looking after dark. As they turned towards the deserted loading docks they found themselves strangely on edge. Maybe it was the moon, all orange and looming overhead or maybe it was the fog making a misty blur of the greenish glare of the floodlights that lined the back of the building. Either way, it was enough to give anyone the creeps.

Kenny spun around on his heel and loped backwards, keeping up his conversation.

"Hey, Cartman, can I stay at your house tonight?" he asked. "Karen's not gonna be home and it's Friday so that means I'm gonna have to listen to my mom and dad get smashed and beat the shit out of each other and then fuck on every surface of our house and I'd rather just... Y'know... Not do that."

"Yeah, whatever," Cartman said, shrugging. He glanced at the other two. "You guys wanna come too? Classic cool kid sleepover?"

"Sure," Stan said, cracking a grin. "Kyle?"

Kyle sighed. "Okay, fine," he said.

"Kyle, you should be glad I even invited you," Cartman said, scrunching up his nose. "Considering you probably just gave me Jew Rabies or something."

"I'll put you out of your misery," Kyle said, flatly.

Kenny laughed and stretched his arms up over his head but suddenly froze, stopping motionless in his tracks, eyes locked on something back the way they had come.

"What is it?" Kyle asked. He turned around too and so did Cartman and Stan.

A person stood about two-hundred feet away. It was perfectly still and cloaked in inky blackness but a flawless silhouette of a male figure, legs apart and shoulders squared. The floodlights illuminated a murky path between the four of them and this humanoid shadow.

"What the fuck," Kyle muttered under his breath. The hair on the back of his neck bristled under his coat collar and he shivered with goosebumps.

"Oh, god, we're gonna get fucking mugged," Stan lamented quietly, shaking his head.

"Hey, man, we don't have any money!" Cartman shouted, cupping his hands around his mouth.

Kyle punched him in the shoulder. "Cartman, shut the fuck up!" he hissed.

"I'm trying to not get mugged!" Cartman exclaimed with a huff.

"Dude, man, this guy is freaking me out," Kenny muttered.

"It's probably just a fucking homeless person," said Cartman, rolling his eyes. "Let's just go."

Kyle hesitated for a minute, glancing between the figure, which still stood completely static against the yellow light, his friends, and the hundred or so yards left until they were back in a residential area and probably much safer than they were now. Before he could make a decision, though, the shadowed person suddenly broke into a sprint, headed straight for them.

"Oh, *shit!*" Cartman and Stan said, almost in unison, and all four boys turned as quickly and ran in the opposite direction as fast as they could, screeching at the top of their lungs.

"Fuck!" Kenny yelped, tripping over his untied shoelace and falling flat on his face on the asphalt.

Kyle turned back first and grabbed Kenny by the armpits, trying to haul him to his feet, and was quickly joined by Cartman, who was as strong as he was big, and who yanked him up off the ground by his hood as the figure gained on them.

They swiveled to keep running but, by then, it was too late and the mysterious figure, which was now clearly an adult man, slammed into Cartman's shoulder, sending both of them skidding across the pavement.

"What the fuck!?" Cartman shrieked, blindly swinging a punch and nailing the man in the side of the head as they scrambled around on the ground.

Under the light, Kyle could see the man properly now. He looked to be about thirty with dark hair and olive skin that looked pallid and almost translucent. His eyes were wild and luminous, almost feral. He gnashed his teeth as he struggled to pin Cartman down.

Unfortunately for Kyle, it was in his instincts to protect his friends, even if that friend was Eric Cartman. He braced himself and ran full force, shoving the man off of him with all his body weight.

Cartman sprung quickly to his feet but, giving Kyle a firm, appreciative nod in the brief second before the man lunged at him again, this time at chest height with an inhuman howl.

Cartman's back was slammed against the brick wall and he struggled against him with his hands at his shoulders.

"This guy's on bath salts and he wants to eat my face off!" he shouted.

Stan, ever resourceful, had grabbed a thick two-by-four from a nearby pile of scrap lumber and hit the strange man over the back with it so hard that it cracked in half, splintering onto the slick blacktop.

The man, mostly unfazed, shoved Cartman, hard, into a heap of trash and turned his attention to Stan.

"Oh, son of a bitch!" Stan groaned, squaring up as the man came at him.

Kenny helped Cartman to his feet once again.

"You good, man?" Kenny asked.

"Yeah but, like, fucking shit," Cartman grumbled, clutching his side as he stood. He pulled his hand away for a second and it was dripping with dark red. He winced. "Ow, Jesus Christ!"

"A little help here!" Stan cried, defending himself the best he could. He swung his fist again and collided with the stranger's jaw. The man recoiled for a second and Stan cursed, loudly, grabbing his hand to his chest.

Running and pouncing with a shrill screech, like a some sort of wildcat, Kenny jumped on the guy's back, squeezing his forearms around his neck in an effort to choke him out. Easily, however, the man grabbed him by the wrists and flung him over his head, slamming him down on the ground on his back, unconscious at once.

"Kenny!" Stan shouted, alarmed, sprinting to his side.

"You bastard!" Kyle cried, rushing at the stranger but his punch was deflected and the man grabbed him by the wrist and put him in a headlock, much like the one Cartman had put him in earlier. Except, this time, the man grabbed him by the hair, pulled his head back, and sunk his teeth into the pliant flesh at the crook of Kyle's neck.

Kyle cried out as he felt the jolt of pain. He noted that the stranger's teeth seemed to cut through his skin like butter and he felt the warmth of his own blood trickling down his neck and soaking the collar of his shirt.

So, he did what he did the last time he had been put in a headlock and bit down on the man's exposed forearm as hard as he could until he could taste foul, metallic blood.

The man let go of him immediately, but grabbed him by the shoulders and hurled him to the ground. Kyle's head hit the pavement with a sickening crack and then, for him, everything was very dark.

He was only out for a moment and, when he next opened his eyes, his ears were ringing and he was able to watch with foggy vision as Stan and Cartman impaled the stranger with a large piece of rebar around the middle, pinning him up against the concrete wall. The man let out a strangled yowl and tore the steel from his flesh, tossing it to the ground with a clatter. Finally giving up, he scrambled up the side of the building like Spider-Man or some sort of demented parkour master and disappeared into the night.

Stan was at Kyle's side in a matter of seconds, still clutching his wrist in pain. "Kyle?" he asked. "Are you okay?"

Kyle groaned and blinked several times, trying to get his eyes to readjust. He inhaled sharply, as he struggled to sit up, gingerly touching the back of his head. His hat had fallen off in the fray and his auburn curls were sticky and matted with fresh blood.

"I think I should probably go to the hospital," he said, finally. He grasped around blindly in the dark but found his gray beanie, sopping wet, in a puddle of water. He sighed and stuck it in the front pocket of his jacket.

"Yeah, me too," said Stan. "I'm pretty sure my hand is broken. Plus, Cartman probably needs stitches and Kenny's still unconscious."

Stan helped Kyle to his feet and let him cling, unsteadily, to his arm as he gained his bearings. Cartman, several feet away, picked Kenny up off the asphalt and slung him over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes before limping over to where the other two stood.

"What the fuck? Did he bite you?" Cartman asked, looking Kyle over. It almost sounded like a laugh.

Kyle touched his bloody neck. He could feel the indents of where the man's teeth had punctured his skin and it was still wet with blood. It didn't hurt as bad as he thought it would but it still stung. "Yeah," he said. "I bit him back, though."

Cartman snorted. "Of course you did. You're biting everyone tonight." His expression turned serious as he studied him. "Christ, Jew, he really fucked you up, didn't he?"

"I'm fine," Kyle said, turning away. The world around him spun nauseatingly as he did so but he managed to steady himself. "Come on. We'd better get to the emergency room before we all fucking bleed out in the street."

"Yeah, yeah," Cartman said, hiking Kenny's lifeless body up a little bit on his shoulder, pressing his free hand to his bleeding side. "Let's go."

They walked together in silence for a while, making their way the couple of blocks to the hospital. Finally, Kyle broke the quiet. "What the fuck was that guy?" he murmured.

"I don't know but he definitely didn't seem human," said Stan.

"It was just a crackhead," Cartman said, rolling his eyes.

"He scaled a wall like it was nothing!" Stan exclaimed.

Cartman shrugged, wincing from the pain in his side. "Big crackhead energy."

Kyle sighed and his breath turned to clouds on his lips. His mouth tasted like blood and his head hurt. The moon overhead seemed bright enough now to hurt his eyes like he was staring into the sun. He rubbed at his temple and stumbled a bit but Stan caught him by the cuff of his sleeve and steadied him.

"You alright?"

"Yeah," said Kyle. "I'm just definitely concussed."

All four of them were in pretty bad shape. Thankfully the hospital wasn't far.

Cruisin' for a Contusion

Kyle had just gotten back from his CT scan and he looked disdainfully at the collar of his green canvas jacket. It was his favorite jacket and it was now soaked with dark, crusty blood, so much so that he could smell it. His t-shirt was also a mess with those same rust-colored stains set in to the fabric. He needed to wash both as soon as he got home to try and keep the stain from sticking but, unfortunately for him, he was still sitting on a flat, crinkly hospital bed in the emergency department of the local hospital.

Speaking of washing things, he really wanted to wash his hair too. His curls were matted together with sticky, drying blood on the back of his head. It was going to be a real bitch to deal with, though, especially since he was now sporting three staples to the scalp from where his head had met the asphalt earlier. In addition to that, the gaping bite wound on his neck had been covered by a thick square of gauze and taped over so that when he would go to change his dressing it would rip out the fine hairs at the nape of his neck.

The hospital staff seemed to be understaffed and moving at a leisurely pace so Kyle figured he would be there for a few more hours at least. Plus, the doctor had said she'd like to keep him for observation for a while. He had managed to convince her not to admit him overnight so he figured that was the least he could do. He considered calling his mom to let her know what had happened but he really didn't want her to worry. She tended to worry. A lot.

His head was pounding but he had refused an IV of painkillers in favor of swallowing a couple of acetaminophen instead. The fluorescent lights of the hospital had really begun to hurt his eyes but he chalked it up to the concussion and figured it was something he could deal with.

The doctors had told him he could stretch his legs if he wanted to or he could rest. He decided to distract himself from his own pain by visiting his friends in the rooms next door. Stan was away getting x-rays of his hand and Kenny had just been taken down to CT so he figured bothering Cartman would suffice.

"Excuse me, do you fucking mind?" Cartman asked as Kyle leaned in the doorway.

He was currently in the middle of getting stitches for the gash in his side. With one arm he had his red sweatshirt pulled up over his abdomen and his other arm was in the air, resting crooked over his head to give the doctor room to work. His wound was deep and still oozing dark red blood. His ribs were purple and blue, looking almost like some far off nebula. He seemed to have dodged most damage to his face aside from a busted lip and a faint bruise along his cheekbone.

"How many stitches do you need?" Kyle asked, crossing his arms.

"I don't know," Cartman said. He looked down at the physician for confirmation.

"Twenty-four," she said.

"TWENTY-FOUR!" Cartman echoed loudly in astonishment. "Twenty-four goddamn stitches from some crackhead in an alley. Un-fucking-believable." He shook his head and then glanced Kyle over. "What about you? You need stitches?"

"A couple staples," Kyle said with a shrug. "They said I should get a rabies shot before we leave, you know, just in case."

Cartman laughed and cringed as the doctor gave him another small injection of a numbing agent around his wound. "That's kind of hilarious."

"It really isn't," said Kyle.

"Can I watch?"

"Absolutely not."

"Weak," Cartman said. He glanced down and frowned as the doctor dressed and wrapped the long, angry-looking laceration that was now stitched closed with taut black sutures. When she finished, he pulled his shirt back down, gently, mumbling thanks to the doctor as she snapped off her latex gloves and left the room. He tried to take a deep breath in and winced when the pain from his side interjected.

"You good?" Kyle asked, quirking an eyebrow.

"What do you think?" Cartman snapped. He slumped his shoulders and let out a long, laborious sigh. "Twenty-four fucking stitches. AND a cracked rib."

Kyle shrugged again, pursing his lips. "At least he didn't bite you."

Cartman snorted. "At least he didn't bite me," he repeated in acknowledgment. "Fair enough." He leaned back on his arms. "Where's Marsh and Poor Kid?"

"Last I saw them Stan was getting x-rays and Kenny was getting a brain scan or something."

"Good. Kenny fucking needs a brain scan."

Kyle snickered under his breath.

Kenny hadn't regained consciousness until they had already made it to the hospital. Cartman had carried him in to the emergency room and dumped him down on the first available stretcher laid out near the door. He wasn't hurt too badly aside from the bump to the head and as soon as a nurse waved some smelling salts in front of his nose he jolted awake, coughing. The first thing out of his mouth had been "Fuck, that smells like cat piss." Classic Kenny.

It was at that moment that Kenny passed by, being pushed in a wheelchair by a radiologist. He leaned over the hand rest of the chair and smacked Kyle hard on the ass. "Concussion squad represent!" he exclaimed.

Kyle jumped at the contact and spun around, bringing his hand up to his chest in surprise. "Kenny!" he yelped.

Cartman let out a loud laugh and then groaned as it caused a sharp pain in his side. "Ugh, I can't even laugh. Today sucks," he said, reclining in his upright hospital bed, crossing his arms over his chest.

Kenny was gone for a few moments but quickly reappeared in the doorway, next to Kyle. He grinned up at him, widely. He didn't look too worse for wear but he had a gauze patch plastered to his forehead and a couple of scuffs on his chin. "I'm getting discharged, what about you guys?" he asked.

"I should be getting out of here soon," said Cartman. "I don't know where the fuck Stan is and Kyle's gotta get his rabies shot, though."

"Wait, really?" Kenny cackled. "You really think that guy had rabies?"

Kyle rolled his eyes and tucked his hands into his armpits. "Who knows," he said with a scoff. "It's better to be safe, I guess. There was obviously *something* wrong with him."

"Crackhead," Cartman coughed into his fist.

"Dude! He got impaled and then climbed the wall like a freaking spider monkey!" Kyle exclaimed.

"He did *what?!'*" Kenny asked, wide-eyed with shock.

"Oh, yeah, you were KO'd on the pavement like a little bitch," said Cartman. "Me and Stan ran a metal rod through that guy's guts and he ripped it out like nothing and then parkoured up the wall and onto the roof and ran away."

"For real? You're serious?"

"Super serious."

Kenny looked to Kyle for a second answer and Kyle nodded.

"I was a little out of it but essentially, yeah," said Kyle.

"What did I fucking tell you about the werewolf moon, guys!" Kenny exclaimed.

"He wasn't a werewolf," Cartman spit. "There was not one instance of this guy turning into a wolf. That's the whole point of werewolfism."

"Normal humans can't do that!" Kenny retorted.

"But that doesn't mean he was a *werewolf*," Cartman said.

"Vampire, demon, really pissed off wizard, whatever!" said Kenny.

"*Or* a crackhead," Cartman added."

"Can you shut the fuck up about crackheads for five fucking minutes," Kyle snapped. "I mean, Jesus Christ, give it a rest." He pinched the bridge of his nose and exhaled noisily. "God, my head hurts." It really did. The lights were harsh on his eyes and he felt tired and irritated. He just wanted to go home and sleep but dreaded explaining the events of the night to his parents later. He hated hospitals, though. Nothing good ever seemed to happen to him in hospitals.

"I'm gonna go lay down," he said, finally.

"Okay, whatever," said Cartman. "You still wanna come over later?"

Kyle narrowed his eyes at him. It was already two in the morning and it was going to be another few hours before he was even discharged. "It's gonna have to be a hard pass," he said.

Cartman scoffed. "Fine. Loser."

Kyle rolled his eyes and shuffled back to his trauma room cubicle next to Cartman's. He wasn't sure if he was allowed to but he adjusted the lighting near the door so that it was as dim as he could make it while still being able to see, and he shut the door behind him. It was a hospital so it wasn't very quiet but the noise from the hall was significantly muted and he let out a sigh of relief as he laid back on the crinkly hospital pillow.

Several minutes passed and he had almost dozed off in spite of himself when he was awoken by the doctor slipping in through the door and turning up the lights, slightly.

"Try to stay awake for the next couple of hours, okay?" she said. "I know it's late but sleeping after a concussion can be dangerous."

Kyle sat up and rubbed his eyes. "Oh, okay," he said.

The doctor picked up the scans they had taken earlier of his brain from his chart on the counter. She held them out and squinted at them. "Hm," she said. She flipped to the next one and then back again. "Huh."

"What is it?" Kyle asked but he didn't really want to know.

"Nothing," she said. "You're obviously concussed but... Well... It's just that I expected it to be worse, is all. It actually looks pretty good for the injury you sustained!"

"Oh," said Kyle, raising his eyebrows. It was hard to fathom anything that felt like his head did right then was better than expected. Nonetheless, he took it as a good thing. "So, what now?"

"Well," she flipped through a few more pages of his chart. "We want to get you a rabies vaccine. It's highly unlikely you were exposed but it's better to be safe than sorry. We're just waiting on that and then we'll wait a little bit more and see if you're still feeling okay and then we'll see if we can try and get you discharged."

"Okay," said Kyle. "Thank you."

She left and, very soon after, Stan peeked his head in the door.

"Hey!" he said. He held up his arm to show the dark blue cast that wrapped around his hand and wrist. "Broke my hand."

"Nice job," Kyle said with a smirk. "Does it still hurt?"

"Eh, not really. I took a couple Advil and the cast keeps it from hurting, mostly. Did you get your rabies shot yet?"

"Not yet. I'm so fucking tired, though. I can't wait to get out of here," Kyle said.

"You wanna sign my cast?" Stan asked, pushing up the sleeves of his denim jacket and brown flannel to expose more of the plaster cast.

"Yeah, fine," Kyle said, sitting up.

Stan pulled a black Sharpie from his back pocket and handed it to him. He wrote his name plainly and as legibly as he could on the bumpy surface of the cast and noticed that Kenny and Cartman had already signed their names. Cartman's signature was weirdly beautiful to look at. It was elegant and swooping like calligraphy and it looked nice, even on the rough plaster. Kenny signed his name in bubble letters with a crudely drawn penis next to it. Once again, classic Kenny.

"Cool," said Stan as Kyle snapped the cap back on the marker.

Kyle leaned back and grabbed his plastic cup of ice chips that a nurse had given him and he pressed it to his forehead. Stan looked at him with a furrowed brow.

"You alright?"

"Yeah," said Kyle. "Just a headache."

"Makes sense," said Stan. "You hit your head really hard. I really thought you were dead."

"I really thought *Kenny* was dead!" said Kyle. He actually did. When he had hit the pavement and dropped like a stone, Kyle had been terrified that Kenny wouldn't wake up again.

"Me too! I thought you and Kenny were both dead. I'm pretty sure Cartman did too. It sucked."

"At least you tried to avenge us with a piece of rebar," said Kyle. "That counts for something, I guess."

Stan exhaled a laugh through his nose. "Yeah, Cartman was gonna kill that guy for sure."

Kyle rolled his eyes. "He'd go nuts for an excuse to kill anybody because he's a fucking sociopath."

Stan shrugged. "You know, that's fair."

There was a quiet knock at the door and nurse stepped in, holding a metal tray.

"Hi, Kyle, I've got your vaccine," she said trying to sound chipper but it just came out sympathetic. She sat the tray down on the small table on the side of Kyle's hospital bed and began to unwrap a single use syringe.

"Oh, great," said Kyle.

Stan gave him an apologetic grimace as he backed towards the door. "You know what, I'm gonna see if Kenny and Cartman got discharged yet."

"Yeah, yeah," said Kyle, knowing very well that Stan was pretty squeamish around needles. He, himself, didn't like them very much either, obviously, but *c'est la vie* or whatever. He sighed and rolled up the sleeve of his white t-shirt that wasn't very white anymore. The nurse cleaned a small area on his bicep with an alcohol wipe and goosebumps rose on his forearms from the cold.

"Just a little pinch," the nurse said, drawing up the vaccine from it's small, glass vial. She examined the syringe closely and flicked it once or twice to make sure all the bubbles were dispersed. She brought the needle to his skin and he looked away and exhaled deeply. When the shot actually went in the pain wasn't too bad but it wasn't pleasant either and Kyle pressed his eyes closed tightly.

"You're lucky," said the nurse, wiping a small smear of blood away from the injection site with a piece of gauze and tacking on a bandage. "Back in the eighties the needle was much bigger for a rabies vaccine."

Kyle shuddered at the thought and thanked God for modern medicine.

The nurse took his vitals one more time before she left the room and they checked out okay. Kyle was surprised at how little there was actually wrong with him for how terrible he was beginning to feel. He chalked most of it up to emotional trauma and figured he wouldn't mention it so he could get out of the hospital faster. The only thing he was really worried about in that moment was how warm and nice a shower and his bed would feel when he got home.

Soon, though, he would have much more to worry about.

Down With The Sickness

On Monday the air wasn't quite as cold and Stan and Cartman stood at the bus stop, waiting for Kyle and Kenny.

"I can't believe the Jew is late for the bus. Now, Kenny, on the other hand..." Cartman said, stretching his arms gingerly up over his head, his yellow t-shirt riding up a bit on his stomach. He still had his stitches in but his gnarly gash was finally beginning to heal a bit and it didn't hurt quite as bad to move. He yawned. It was early morning and the sky was still streaked with pink, making the snow-capped mountains in the distance appear soft and rosy. "Can't blame him for sleeping in, though. School starts too damn early."

"I sent Kyle like four texts so far this morning and he hasn't even opened them, yet," said Stan, staring down at his phone, dark eyebrows furrowed.

Cartman shrugged. "Whatever. He's probably still being a bitch about his concussion."

"He did get a pretty bad concussion, though."

Cartman shook his head. "These dumb assholes with brain damage, I swear."

They could see the school bus now as it turned onto their street, chugging towards them and screeching to a halt.

"Wait up! Wait up!" Kenny cried, running down the block, clutching his unzipped backpack in his hand. He stopped, panting, just behind Cartman as they lined up to get on the bus.

"Oh, there you are," said Cartman. "I thought you had brain damage."

"Damn, I probably do, amiright?" said Kenny. He quickly zipped his backpack closed and slung it over his shoulder, following Cartman and Stan onto the bus. He took the spot in front of Cartman, at the very back of the bus, and turned around, crossing his arms over the back of the seat. "Kyle's not coming to school today? Does he have a dentist appointment or something, jeez."

"I don't know," said Stan. "Kyle never misses school." He checked his phone one last time and it was finally a message from Kyle.

"I'm sick"

"He says he's sick," Stan said, stuffing his phone into the pocket of his Carhartt jacket.

Cartman sighed and folded his arms behind his head. "Man, if he doesn't come to school our English teacher is gonna make me take him his stupid homework. I'll catch whatever fucking Jew disease he has," he lamented.

"I'll go with you," Kenny offered. "Maybe I'll get sick and be able to stay home this week too."

"I'll come too," said Stan.

"Yeah, we knew you would," Cartman said, rolling his eyes. "Super Best Homos or whatever."

Stan frowned. "Dude, you *know* he never misses school. He's got to be really sick if he's staying home."

"Yeah, cuz he's a freak."

"Wait, maybe he actually got rabies," Kenny said, pursing his lips. "What if his rabies shot didn't work and he got rabies for real?"

"Kenny, can you go be stupid somewhere else?" said Cartman.

"Whatever." Kenny shrugged and slumped back down in his seat, kicking his feet up and taking out his Nintendo Switch. He popped in his shitty bootleg AirPods he got off of Wish and leaned back against the window.

"Seriously, though," Cartman said, leaning across the aisle to talk to Stan. "You think he's dying again or whatever?"

"I don't know. I hope not," said Stan, chewing idly on his bottom lip.

Kyle had been sick a lot when they were kids but now that they were in high school, he had been concerned with perfect attendance. He was supposed to be the valedictorian of their graduating class. He felt like perfect attendance was kind of the cherry on top of the deal. Even if he was sick, though, he usually just powered through it and came to school anyhow.

"Maybe it's his diabetes or something again," Stan added.

"Diabeetus," Cartman repeated then threw his head back against the back of his seat. "Ugh. I hope not. I don't think I can afford to lose another kidney to you snakes."

"Dude, come on," Stan said. "It wasn't even that bad."

"That's easy for you to say!" Cartman exclaimed. He stuffed his hands into his armpits, frowning.

Stan shook his head and scooted up against the cold glass window.

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After school, the three of them trudged back from the bus stop, Cartman in the lead with an armful of books under his arm. He glanced back at Stan and Kenny as they walked.

"He'd better really be sick if I had to carry all his shit to his house for him," he said. "I texted him at lunch but he told me to fuck off which, you know, he probably would have done anyways."

Stan snorted. "He hasn't even texted me back since this morning," he said.

Kyle's house wasn't far and they crowded together on the doorstep as Stan rang the doorbell.

Kyle's mother, Sheila, came to the door after a moment.

"Oh, hello boys," she said. "I'm afraid Kyle's not feeling very well today."

"So we heard, Mrs. Broflovski," Cartman said, believably feigning concern in his voice. Over the years he had learned how to speak to adults in a way that got them easily wrapped around his finger. Arguably, he had mellowed out as he grew up, however, parents, Stan and Kyle's mothers particularly, thought he had transformed into some sort of model citizen, much to his friends' chagrin.

"We just brought him his homework, if it's okay to run it up to him," Cartman said, sweetly.

"Of course, dear," said Sheila, permitting them inside and shutting the door behind them. "He's upstairs in his room."

Cartman gave her a warm, appreciative smile. "Thanks."

On the stairs, Stan elbowed him in the arm. "It's so gross how much Kyle's mom likes you now. My mom too. Honestly, what the fuck?"

Cartman batted his eyelashes at him. "Why, Stanley! Haven't you heard? I've grown into such a fine young man. Can you believe?"

"Cartman gets all the MILFs," Kenny added.

Cartman laughed and Stan made a disgusted face.

"Can you please not call them that?"

"I call 'em as I see 'em," said Kenny.

Stan tapped lightly on Kyle's door with his knuckles and waited for an answer. When there wasn't one, he knocked again with a heavier hand this time.

"Maybe he's sleeping," Kenny suggested with a shrug.

"Well, he's getting his English homework whether he likes it or not," Cartman said. He all but kicked Kyle's door open. "Jew! Wake up! I've got your-"

He stopped mid-sentence as his eyes hit the darkness of the room. The first sign that something was really wrong was just how dark it was. There were blankets up over the windows, blocking out any trace of daylight that might be able to bleed its way in. In the blackness, as their eyes adjusted, they could see Kyle sitting upright in the middle of his bed, facing away from them, staring at nothing.

"Kyle?" Stan asked, hesitantly. "You okay?"

After a long period of silence, Kyle finally spoke but it came out in a raspy whisper. "I'm sick," he said. His voice sounded hoarse and tired and like it took an incredible amount of energy to make any sound at all.

"Yeah, no shit," said Cartman. "I brought you your homework because I'm a good fucking friend. Or something." He slammed the books down on the dresser by the door.

Kyle flinched and turned his head to glance over his shoulder at them. Even in the shadows, his eyes looked glossy and luminous. "Thanks," he said. He swallowed thickly and turned back to the wall. He was quiet for a while again before he spoke again.

"I can't sleep," he said, finally. "I'm so tired and I can't sleep."

"What? That's it?" Cartman said, quirking an eyebrow. "Take some NyQuil or something, damn."

Kyle shot him a scowl. By then their eyes had adjusted enough to notice the pallor of his skin and the dark circles around his bright, bloodshot eyes. He looked exhausted and miserable.

"No," he said. He took a long, harsh breath in, preparing himself for as much of a long-winded Kyle tirade as he could muster. "The light makes my eyes feel like they're going to pop out of my head. I can't eat anything without puking. My throat feels like it's on fire. I'm freezing cold. And I just... I'm just..." He sighed. "I just want to go to sleep."

"Do you think it's rabies for real this time?" Kenny piped up and Cartman whacked him in the back of the head.

"Kenny, shut up," Stan said, under his breath. He stepped forward a little bit into Kyle's room. "Dude, do you need anything? Is there anything we can do?"

"No," said Kyle. "You should just go. Please."

"Oh," said Stan. "Okay." He exchanged a puzzled look with Cartman as he backed out the door. "Well, you know, just let me know if I can help," he said.

"Yeah," Kyle muttered. "Okay."

Slowly, Stan shut the door.

"What the fuck," Kenny mouthed.

"Um," said Stan. "Let's go, I guess."

As they made their way back downstairs, Cartman let out an quick huff. "Jew's got his panties in a bunch, huh? I mean, he's *usually* got sand in his vagina but I mean, damn. Dickhead."

"He must really be sick," said Stan.

They hurried out the front door and decided to reconvene at Stan's house. A few minutes later, Cartman was sprawled out on the Marsh family's sofa while Stan threw his backpack

down on a chair and flopped down on the floor. Kenny wandered into the kitchen to look for snacks.

Stan let out a heavy breath. "Do you think he's okay?"

"Who? Kyle?" Cartman asked. "Yeah, for sure. Believe me, if spite can keep a person alive, Kyle's never gonna die."

"He was weird though, right?"

"Oh, yeah. Super weird."

"You know," Kenny said, appearing in the living room entrance with a mouth full of snack cake, "I don't think Kyle's ever told us to leave before. Us as a whole, I mean. He's definitely kicked us out as individuals. Right, Cartman?"

Cartman snorted. "Yeah." He paused for a second, chewing on his bottom lip, thoughtfully. "Maybe we should go back."

"What? Why? He made it pretty clear he doesn't want to be bothered, dude," said Stan.

"He never wants to be bothered," said Cartman. "If I cared that I was bothering Kyle, my life would be meaningless." He frowned. "Not, like, in a gay way. But, like, well... you know what I mean."

"Yeah," Stan said, slowly. He sighed and grabbed his backpack off the chair, unzipping it and pulling out a paperback novel. "I don't think I have time to go back over there and bug him tonight, though. I've still got to finish reading *'Salem's Lot* and write a book report on it by tomorrow."

Cartman waved his hand, dismissively. "Just Sparknotes it."

"Yeah, just Google it, dude," said Kenny.

"I don't know," Stan said, idly flipping through the pages. "I kinda like the story. It's about vampires."

Kenny snapped his fingers and pointed at Cartman. "Vampires," he said. "Relevant."

Cartman rolled his eyes and groaned. "Will you shut up about vampires and werewolves and zombies and shit? We've got enough problems around here."

Kenny shrugged. "I'm just saying. Weirder shit has happened."

Cartman scoffed and sat up, leaning against the arm of the sofa. "You can say that again. This place is a nightmare. I can't wait until graduation next month so I can finally get the fuck out of South Park."

Cartman was planning on taking a gap year after graduation to travel around and find somewhere exciting. He wasn't really sure where he wanted to go to school or what he would

go for or even if he wanted to go in the first place. Right now, the only thing on his mind was adventure.

"Don't leave me," Kenny whined. "I'll miss you."

"I'll visit," Cartman said. "You're really planning to stick around here, though?"

"I'm not," said Stan. "It's the Pacific Northwest for me."

"Yeah, we know. University of Oregon. You've told us a hundred billion times already, " said Cartman.

Stan had already been accepted into the college's marine biology program and he was excited for the fall to get started. He had dreamed of spending his days whale watching and studying marine life since he was a kid.

Kenny was staying in South Park for the foreseeable future or until his younger sister went off to college as well. He never felt like the collegiate type, anyhow. He figured he'd work at a convenience store and rent a crummy studio apartment for the next couple of years. It didn't bother him. He made the most of it.

Kyle's plans were the most ambitious of the four seeing as he had been accepted into Harvard Law School on a partial scholarship. He had always been smart but he really pushed himself for his last few years of high school to get in. He was proud of it but never boastful. Kyle valued humility above most things.

"I'm gonna be so lonely," Kenny whined. "You're all leaving me."

"I'm sure you'll be able to hang out with, like, Butters or something. I think he's staying in Colorado," said Cartman. "Plus, once Karen gets out of this shithole and you can finally let yourself leave, you can come stay with me in New York or LA or something."

"Okay, boo," said Kenny.

Stan let out a long exhale, crossing his legs and leaning back against the armchair, opening his book. "Do you guys wanna do, like, a study session or something? I've gotta do my homework so if you guys wanna do homework too, that'd be cool!"

Cartman made a face. "I dunno. I was planning on maybe just, you know, not doing that. Plus, Kenny never does his homework."

"That's true, I'm failing math," said Kenny.

"We can order pizza later," Stan suggested.

"Hm," said Cartman. "Yeah, okay, I'm in." He took his Economics textbook out of his backpack and twirled his pencil around on his fingers like a tiny baton. "Kenny. Do your fractions or whatever."

Kenny sighed and dropped to the floor, rummaging through the loose papers in his backpack. "Okay, mom."

Meanwhile, back at the Broflovski residence, Kyle still hadn't touched the homework that Cartman had brought over for him. Instead, he still sat in the same spot, unmoving, still staring at the same wall. His eyes burned, even in the darkness, and cold sweat dribbled down his pallid skin. It hurt to swallow and his mouth was dry and parched, so much so that it was almost hard to breathe. He felt empty inside and his body ached for sustenance but rejected anything he tried to give it. Most of all, he was thirsty in a way water couldn't quench and he felt like it might kill him.

He had spiked a high fever over the weekend and despite the extreme temperature he still couldn't get warm. He had lied to his mother about how high his fever had gotten before it broke so she wouldn't make him go back to the hospital. Once his fever broke, his body temperature had continued to drop past the average. He stopped checking when it got to 96.8. He couldn't be sure what it was then. He knew he should probably go back to the hospital but he adamantly refused. He had spent enough time in the hospital recently and was determined to power through it at home with plenty of rest and fluids.

If only he could sleep or drink. And the insomnia was worse than the thirst. It was driving him mad. It had been days, full, entire days, since he had slept. He had gone to bed after he left the hospital late on Friday night and awoken Saturday morning when the sun broke through his blinds in even rows. It had been the sun that had roused him and the pain that had shot through his eyes when he saw it made him scramble for a blanket to hang up to cover the window. It was better but had still not been enough so he had layered another blanket on top to create his current den of darkness. His eyes thanked him but he hadn't been able to get back to sleep since. It was Monday night and he was still awake. He was restless and agitated and awake.

He was sure that if the insomnia wouldn't kill him, the starvation and dehydration would. He almost longed for death, in the way that one does when experiencing a terrible illness. But this was unlike anything he had ever felt before.

Eventually, it would get better, but first, it would only continue to get worse.

Forget Everything You Used to Know

By Friday Kyle was feeling okay. He hadn't gone to school all week but he finished up his makeup work that afternoon. Prom was the next day and Kyle's mother was adamant that he should go. At this point, he figured he'd be feeling up to it. He had finally managed to sleep for a few hours on Wednesday night and then he slept again for most of Thursday. The only symptoms he had that really still persisted were sensitivity to light, a slight sore throat, and a general sickly look. His skin was still pale and he looked tired but, physically, he felt okay. His body temperature still hadn't gone back up to his usual 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit, however. The last time he had checked, it had been 95 degrees on the head which didn't seem right but he felt fine so he brushed it off. The thirst and hunger he had felt when he was sick hadn't really gone away but it was getting easier to ignore. He chalked it up to his body needing extra nutrition to get back to full health.

The bite wound on his neck had already healed enough so that it was nothing but a pink scar. He was supposed to go back to the hospital and get the staples removed from his scalp but, in a moment of extreme irritation when he was sleep deprived, he had yanked them out himself and was surprised to find that laceration mostly healed as well.

As of Saturday morning, the first weekend in May, he was feeling pretty good.

He was going to prom with Bebe Stevens. They were decently close friends and lab partners in chemistry class so when she asked him (yes, *she* asked *him*) he figured it could be fun. His mother, who had always loved Bebe, was ecstatic.

The plan for the evening was for him and his parents to go to Bebe's house for photos. Stan, Kenny, and Cartman would then meet up there with their dates for even more photos until the limo Bebe's mother had rented arrived to take them to the high school where the event was taking place.

It was a dreary, gray day and it had rained earlier in the afternoon. The clouds in the sky still hung low and heavy. It looked like a miserable day for a prom but Kyle was glad he could pose with Bebe for their prom photos indoors. Light didn't bother him too much when it filtered in through the windows and it only made his eyes water a little. Outside, though, he had to wear sunglasses to be able to see at all.

The photos were stiff and formal despite Kyle trying his best to be relaxed about everything. He was an anxious person and it was his first day out of the house in a week so he was a little off his game. Nobody seemed to mind. Bebe outshone him anyhow. She looked gorgeous, as usual. Half of her curly blonde hair was pulled back into an elaborate braid while the other half spilled down her back in golden ringlets. Her dress was deep red, shimmering, and form fitting, cascading off her hips like a ruby waterfall, with a long slit that ran up the side. She was taller than Kyle, especially in her stilettos, but, to be fair, Bebe was taller than most people she knew.

Kyle's suit was dark green and excellently tailored. Together, he and Bebe looked a little Christmas-y but the contrast looked good, especially with Kyle's red tie and Bebe's dark green corsage. Plus, Kyle's hair kind of matched Bebe's dress as well. He didn't usually like to go out without some sort of hat or beanie since he had always been a little self-conscious about his curls but they were fixed neatly and looked presentable, at least.

After the pictures had been taken and their parents were busy talking about prints and doubles, Kyle and Bebe sat on a white sofa far away from the commotion.

"So, are you feeling better now? You weren't at school all week and I was starting to get worried that I'd end up without a date!" said Bebe.

"Oh, yeah," said Kyle. "I got a concussion last weekend and I think it made me sick. It might have been the flu or something, though." He paused. "I don't think it's contagious though, but, I mean, I'm not going to try to kiss you or anything, if that's what you're worried about."

Bebe laughed. "I wasn't expecting you to," she giggled. "That's kind of why I asked you to be my date in the first place! I just want to have fun with my friends tonight, you included, without having to worry about getting my ass groped during a slow dance or having to give head in the limo or whatever. I like hanging out with you because you're, well, you know!"

Kyle quirked an eyebrow. "Wait, what?"

"I mean, I'm just saying. Plus, like, I'm bisexual so I totally get it," said Bebe.

"Wow, that's cool. Thanks for telling me," said Kyle. "But, I'm... confused?"

Bebe made a peculiar face. "Well, you *are* gay, right?"

"Uh!" Kyle exclaimed, nervously. "I don't know?! Maybe!?" It wasn't something he cared to think about, much. Currently, his sexuality was pretty much irrelevant to his daily life. He knew he probably was gay or bisexual or something along those lines but that was a problem for another day. Mostly, he was confused as to how Bebe had known.

"Oh! Sorry if you're not!" said Bebe. "You just gave me that vibe."

"No, I'm... I mean... Probably," said Kyle. He glanced over his shoulder to make sure no one had overheard the conversation. "I'm not really sure. I'll figure it out in college or something."

"Aww, poor little confused Kyle!" Bebe cooed, sincerely.

Kyle frowned. "How did you even know?"

"Oh, I have the world's best gaydar. Trust me," Bebe said, waving a perfectly manicured hand, dismissively. She smiled with her red painted lips. "Plus, I've known you since we were, like, eight."

"So has literally everyone else!"

"True," Bebe said. "I'm just perceptive, I guess."

"Hm."

"Do you want to know who else?"

"Well... Okay..."

"Well, there's Butters-"

"Oh, come on. Everyone knows about Butters," said Kyle. "You can't say Tweek and Craig either because that was a given."

"Yeah, yeah," said Bebe. "But, anyhow, I'm positive Kenny's bisexual and I'm pretty sure Clyde likes a little sausage on the side, if you know what I mean." She winked.

Kyle snorted. "Okay, I can see where you're coming from."

"Wait, I haven't even told you my hottest hot take. I mean, not *hottest* but, like, hear me out for a minute." She paused for emphasis while Kyle wordlessly prompted her to continue.

"Eric Cartman," she said, waving her hands as if presenting it to him. "Genuine gay."

Kyle had to laugh out loud. "Really?"

"I'm *positive*. Right hand up to god, Kyle."

"That's your left hand."

"Left hand up to god, Kyle."

Kyle snickered and shook his head. "I don't know."

"Trust me. Just trust me," said Bebe.

Kyle opened his mouth to say something in response but the doorbell rang and Bebe's mother hurried past them to answer it.

"Hey," Kyle said, quietly, to Bebe. "Can you please not tell anybody? About me?"

"Yeah, of course!" said Bebe. "Your secret is safe with me!"

Kyle hadn't thought much about it being a secret in the first place but it wasn't something he had really planned on admitting to the world just yet. Or at all, ever. It's not that he was opposed to it, it just seemed like it would cause more problems than he needed at this point in his life. He was surprised and a little impressed at Bebe's intuition, though. It made him wonder if other people had figured him out. It also made him wonder if she was right about everyone else. Especially Cartman, and it made him a little nauseous.

It was Stan and Wendy with their parents at the door. Stan's hair was slicked back and his tuxedo was navy blue. He wore a baby pink rose pinned to his suit jacket to match Wendy's elegant, chiffon dress. The two of them always looked good together. They had been dating for years and were essentially a matched set at this point.

Kyle hadn't seen Stan or any of his friends since he had been sick and slightly delirious and told them to leave him alone. He wasn't even sure if they anticipated him going out with them tonight.

"Hey!" said Stan, after greeting Bebe and her mother. "You're feeling better!"

"Yeah," said Kyle, rising from the couch. "Sorry for, you know, kicking you out of my house on Monday."

"Don't worry about it, man," said Stan with a bright grin. "I'm just glad you're feeling okay!"

"How's your concussion?" Wendy chimed.

"Mostly fine," said Kyle. When he really thought about it there was still a little bit of residual headache but it was easy to ignore.

Wendy and Bebe wandered off to chat and Stan and Kyle sat back down on the couch while the parents occupied the kitchen.

"I didn't think you'd be feeling up to prom tonight," said Stan.

"Well, you know how it is. It only happens once, I guess. My mom would probably kick my ass if I bailed and she couldn't get prom pictures," said Kyle.

Stan chuckled. "You're okay, then? I was really worried about you. We all were."

Kyle's pursed his lips. He didn't know how to feel about making his friends worry. "Um, yeah, I'm fine. My eyes are still really sensitive to light and my throat's kind of sore so I'm not a hundred percent better yet but I'm okay for the most part." He decided to change the subject. "So, do you know if Kenny's coming tonight?"

"Yeah, I think so."

"Did he get a date? He never mentioned going with anybody."

"I'm pretty sure he's going with Tammy Warner."

"Really? I thought she graduated?"

"Nah, she got held back a year and she's in cyber school."

Kyle had met Tammy a couple of times and thought she was nice enough. She and Kenny showed up next. In a split second from the moment Kenny walked in the door in his basic rental tux, he leaped over the couch and landed in Kyle's lap, hugging him under the armpits.

"Kyle! You're alive!" he exclaimed. He grinned and Kyle noticed he had a new set of lip piercings. "You like my snakebites?" Kenny asked. "Tammy did 'em for me the other day."

"Yeah, they look cool," said Kyle. He gave a polite greeting to Tammy despite the fact that her prom date was currently sitting in his lap.

Just as quickly as Kenny had jumped onto him, he jumped off and ran to the window. "Oh, boy, here comes Cartman and Heidi," he said. "I don't know why they're still... whatever they are. I swear they hate each other so much."

Kyle had almost forgotten that Cartman and Heidi were together again. Or maybe they weren't. The two of them had been on and off for years and could seemingly barely stand to be around the other. Force of habit, Kyle guessed. Cartman never talked about her except to complain and it was impossible to tell when they were actually *together* so much so that everyone seemed to forget that they were even a thing. Kyle remembered what Bebe had said earlier and wondered how that factored into everything. He tried to forget about it, though, because, really, it wasn't any of his business.

Cartman wore a burgundy suit and black bow tie and his hair was neatly combed. He looked really good and he knew it, although Kyle thought he kind of looked reminiscent of an antebellum lawyer. Heidi's dress was a deep teal and fell to the floor in even pleats. Like Kyle and Bebe, Cartman and Heidi didn't match, per se but the colors contrasted well enough.

Cartman looked surprised to see Kyle sitting perched on the arm of the couch when he came in. "Oh, hey," he said with raised eyebrows. "You didn't die."

"Purely by spite," said Kyle.

Cartman cracked a grin. "Wouldn't expect anything else," he said.

The house was pretty crowded by then so they arranged themselves for photos and last minute touch ups before the limousine arrived. During the commotion, Kyle glanced out the window and let out a small sigh of relief as he watched the sun begin to sink down below the Rockies on the horizon. The looming rain clouds had begun to disperse and the sky was alive with orange and gold, fading to a dark, murky blue. At least the sun wouldn't be up to hurt his eyes.

"Come on," Bebe said, suddenly appearing beside him, resting her hand on his shoulder. "We're gonna miss prom walk."

The limo had finally pulled up along the curb in front of Bebe's house and the eight of them piled in. Kyle ended up squished against the side next to Cartman, unfortunately.

"There are like ten seats in this thing and I end up next to you," Kyle lamented, pushing back against him with his shoulder.

Cartman retaliated by pinning him even tighter against the leather interior. "Aw, you need a little more room, Kyle?" he taunted.

"Fuck off," Kyle wheezed. He shoved back again.

"Kyle, you're gonna hurt my twenty four stitches," Cartman whined.

"Good," said Kyle, leaning against him with all his weight.

"Maybe Eric should have just asked Kyle to go to prom with him instead," Heidi whispered to Bebe who stifled a giggle into her palm.

Kyle was surprised that he heard her so clearly when nobody else seemed to. It distracted him for just long enough for Cartman to slam into him one more time. Kyle huffed and crossed his arms tightly to his chest, conceding to the torment. Cartman was just too big and there was just too much of him.

Cartman glanced down at him with a smirk. "Aw, come on, Jew. I haven't gotten to rip on you all week. I've gotta make up for lost time."

"Great," Kyle said, flatly.

The rest of the ride and the prom walk were generally uneventful and, soon, Kyle found himself standing alone off to the side, watching as his friends danced. He didn't mind. He wasn't much of a dancer. He leaned against a decorative pillar and nursed a plastic cup of punch, listening to some pop song he had heard before but never paid much attention to, as the event really seemed to be picking up.

He watched Stan pick up Wendy and spin her around. Bebe and Heidi took selfies together with Red and Nichole and Token and Clyde goofed off with Tweek and Craig nearby. Cartman had vanished somewhere which was never good and Kenny and Tammy weren't around either, having probably sneaked away to fuck in a janitor's closet.

Kyle felt a twinge of melancholy as he observed the people he had grown up with having the time of their lives. Graduation was soon and he didn't know if he'd see some of them again afterwards. It was a little sad but he was glad he had come.

He noticed Annie Knitts shuffle up next to him, her poofy orange taffeta dress audibly ruffling, fumbling with the yellow corsage she was trying to pin back on her chest. She looked over at him and smiled politely.

"I can't get this stupid thing back on," she said. She flinched, suddenly. "Ouch!" She pulled her finger back, suddenly, as a small drop of blood pooled at the tip. It was a tiny and insignificant finger prick.

But Kyle could smell it.

"Whoa," he muttered to himself, taken off guard, letting out a small gasp.

He knew what blood smelled like but it had never smelled like this. Not to him. It was enthralling and his throat felt drier than ever. He watched tantalizingly as Annie smeared it between her fingers and brought it quickly to her lips, then trying again to fasten the flowers to her dress, unaware that Kyle was watching her, intently.

He could hear his own heart pounding but, under that, he could hear hers thumping in her chest and he could see the throbbing artery in her neck and he broke into a sweat as he realized in horror that he wanted nothing more than to tear her throat out. He wanted to rip her to shreds. He wanted and needed to taste the blood in her veins.

He shook his head and forced himself away from her, stepping back a bit, appalled at the thoughts racing through his mind. The world around him and the floor beneath him seemed to be spinning out of control and no matter where he looked, though, he saw someone else. Every person he saw, his friends and classmates, were reduced to nothing but warm bodies in his frenzy. All around him were warm bodies full of blood and his desire to kill was inescapable. His hunger and thirst were clouding his judgment and he knew he had to get out of there before he slaughtered someone.

Frantically, he ran from the building, all but holding his breath. He pushed through the doors and out into the dark, empty parking lot, doubled over and panting heavily.

The air was cold and bracing and each breath grounded him more and brought him back to his normal state of mind. He was still horrified about the urges he felt to maul his peers inside and he paced back and forth in the gravel, anxiously running his hand through his coppery curls.

"Oh, what the fuck," he muttered to himself. "What the actual fuck?"

"Hey," came a voice from behind him, sidetracking him from his conversation with himself.

Kyle whipped around and, to his dismay, saw Cartman leaning up against the side of the building, smoking a cigarette. His suit jacket was off and tossed over his shoulder and he had the sleeves of his white button-up shirt rolled up to his elbows, despite the chill. Black suspenders bowed over his chest, really solidifying the antebellum vibe Kyle got from him earlier.

"What's wrong with you?" Cartman asked. He took another drag on his cigarette and then tossed it to the ground, stomping it out with the heel of his shoe.

Kyle thought about denying anything was wrong but he was too panicked to even think straight, let alone come up with a convincing lie. "I don't know," he said, rubbing his eyes and then dragging his hands down his face. "I feel like I'm going insane."

Cartman looked at him peculiarly and stepped towards him. "Why?"

Kyle shook his head, shoving his hands into his armpits to keep them from trembling. "You're gonna think I'm crazy. Cartman, I feel like I'm fucking crazy."

"So?"

Kyle exhaled deeply, pinching the bridge of his nose. "I just had some kind of insane urge to kill people," he said, resignedly.

Cartman raised his eyebrows, looking somewhere between surprised and impressed. "Huh," he said. "For real?"

"Yes," Kyle hissed. He paused for a moment, trying to make some sense out of how he was feeling. "I think I need to leave. Like, I need to go someplace where I'm not gonna freak out and murder anybody right now."

Cartman shrugged. "Well, let's go, then."

Kyle narrowed his eyes. "What? You wanna come with me?"

"Yeah, why not?" said Cartman. "It's not like I have anything better to do. It was lame as hell in there."

"What about Heidi?"

"Eh, she doesn't put out anyhow," said Cartman. He nodded his head in the direction of the sidewalk leading away from the campus. "Come on."

Kyle hesitated for a moment but agreed, walking with Cartman. "This has been the weirdest fucking week of my life," he said. "I should text Bebe and tell her I felt sick and had to leave." He pulled out his phone and sent her a quick message. She replied quickly.

"okay lol i hope you feel betterrrrrrrr bb"

Kyle put his phone away and stuffed his hands into the pockets of his slacks.

Cartman pulled his pack of Marlboros from his shirt pocket and took one out between his fingers as they walked, igniting it with a plain white lighter.

Kyle watched him, intently, out of the corner of his eye. He wondered about what Bebe had said about him earlier. "I didn't know you still smoked."

"Eh. Sometimes. Some days you just need to chain smoke, though," Cartman said. He took a puff, letting the wisps of pale gray smoke curl out from between his lips into the frigid air and then held the cigarette out to Kyle. "You look like you could use this more than I do, though."

Kyle declined and shook his head. "No, thanks. I'm just... God... What the fuck is wrong with me?"

Cartman snorted. "Been asking you that for years."

"Shut up," Kyle snapped. "I'm serious."

They came upon a small playground that they hadn't been to since they were elementary school kids. It looked a little ominous in the night but it had a familiar sort of nostalgia to it. Cartman sat down on a jungle gym to smoke his cigarette, silently prompting Kyle to explain his predicament.

Kyle paced back and forth for a moment, still shaking all over, almost like he was slightly vibrating. He let out a long, hissing breath. "It was the blood," Kyle said, finally.

"What?"

"Annie. She hurt her finger," said Kyle. "I could smell it. The blood."

Cartman quirked an eyebrow. "Uh-huh," he said, slowly.

"I could smell it and I felt like a fucking shark! It felt like I was gonna die without it." Kyle pressed his hands to his temples, looking up towards the sky. The clouds from earlier were almost completely gone and the sky looked like a bottomless sea of stars. "God, Cartman," he said, his voice catching a little in his throat. "I don't know what's happening to me."

"You know," Cartman said, pausing to take drag on his cigarette, "I really don't think you're okay right now."

Kyle glowered at him and his eyes were so luminous that they seemed to be emitting their own light. "Yeah, no shit."

Cartman watched him, curiously, thinking. "Huh," he said after a minute, like he had an idea.

"What?"

"I hate to say this, but maybe Kenny was right."

"Right about what?" asked Kyle. "You think I've got rabies or something?"

"No, not about the rabies thing," said Cartman. "About the werewolf moon or whatever."

"You think I'm a *werewolf*?"

"No, don't be stupid," said Cartman. "I think you're a *vampire*."

Kyle let out a loud bark of a laugh. "Are you kidding me? That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard! You think that guy was a vampire? You insisted that he was just a crackhead like forty-eight times."

"Yeah, but crackhead bites don't make you want to kill people and drink their blood," said Cartman. "You've gotta admit, it fits the bill."

Kyle shook his head. "No. That's just... It's ridiculous! Vampires aren't even real, you said so yourself."

"No, I said *werewolves* aren't real," Cartman said, pointing a finger. "Vampires are a different story. Think about it, though. He bit you. You got really sick. Now have some sort of insatiable bloodlust? Coincidence? I think not." He flicked his cigarette butt into the wet mulch and crossed his arms. "What's different now?"

"The sun hurts my eyes," Kyle said. "And I'm just really th... I'm really thirsty all the time... And my... my temperature is really low... and..." He stopped. "No. No. Vampires aren't real. Vampires are *not* real," he said, like he was trying to convince himself.

Cartman shrugged emphatically. "I'm just saying!" His gaze flicked over Kyle's frame. "I will say you're looking kind of dead these days."

"What's *that* supposed to mean?" Kyle huffed.

"Just look at you!" said Cartman, gesturing to him. "Your skin is all pale and your eyes are all stupid and glowy. That says vampire to me. Lemme see your teeth."

"No!" said Kyle. "You don't need to see my *teeth*!"

"You're just afraid that they're gonna be fangs or something!" Cartman exclaimed. He hauled himself to his feet and stood right in front of Kyle who frowned up at him. "Just lemme see real quick."

Kyle let out a deep, irritated sigh but curled his lips back, slightly, with reluctance. Cartman took it a bit further, though, when he pinched Kyle's cheek, roughly, exposing his teeth even more, against his will.

"Oh," Cartman said, a little surprised. "Y-yeah. That's... um... that settles it for me."

"What?" Kyle asked, his hand flying up to his mouth. "Are you fucking with me?" He ran his tongue along his canine teeth. They felt more defined than he had ever noticed before, and they were needle sharp. "Oh my god," he groaned. "This can't be happening to me." He rubbed his eyes in dismay.

"What are you gonna do?" Cartman asked, sitting back down, cross-legged on the jungle gym platform.

"I don't know," said Kyle. "You know, maybe this is all just... Maybe it's nothing. Maybe I'm fine."

"Maybe," said Cartman but it sounded like he wasn't buying it.

"I'm gonna go home, I think," Kyle said. He ran his fingers through his hair.

"Want me to come with you?"

"No," said Kyle. "I'm just going to lock myself in my room for the night, I think." He was terrified of getting the urge to kill again. He worried that his dad might cut himself shaving or his mom would nick her finger in the kitchen and he would go feral and murder them by accident. He figured locking himself in would be safe enough, for the night, at least.

"Alright, whatever," said Cartman. "Guess I'll go home too."

"You know, you could always, I don't know, go back to prom? With your friends? And your girlfriend?" Kyle said.

"Meh," said Cartman, shrugging. "Nah." He hopped down off of the playground equipment and headed in the opposite direction. "Later, Jew. Try not to kill anybody."

Kyle swallowed. He hoped he wouldn't.

He hurried home and silently slipped up the stairs to his room, locking the door behind him and jamming a chair up against the doorknob. He knew it wouldn't keep him from breaking

out if things got extreme but he hoped it would deter him enough to distract him until he could regain composure.

He let out another long sigh and fell back on his bed, loosening his tie. He flopped down on his back, staring up at the ceiling. There were still glow in the dark stars plastered above his bed from when he was a kid and they reminded him of the playground with Cartman and all the stars overhead.

He was startled out of his memory, though, suddenly, by a sharp tap at the glass of his window...

On the Corner of My Mouth

It was two in the morning when Kyle showed up at Cartman's house. He tried calling first, he really did, but there wasn't an answer and Kyle didn't want to go to the front door and wake up Cartman's mom so he was forced to take entrance through his bedroom window, like they would sometimes do when they were kids.

Silently, he slipped into Cartman's darkened bedroom. Even in the pitch black Kyle could see just fine. He wasn't surprised about it anymore, not after tonight, though it was a little unsettling. He stood there for a minute, watching the rise and fall of Cartman's chest as he slept.

"Cartman," he said, in a loud whisper.

Cartman jolted awake, obviously startled, flinging off his covers and falling off the bed in a panic. "Huhbuhwah?" he sputtered, half-asleep. His eyes adjusted to the dark and he realized Kyle was standing in his bedroom in the middle of the night, his green eyes glowing inhumanly in the shadows. "Jesus Christ! You could knock first!" He climbed back up onto his bed, pulling his blankets with him.

Kyle didn't say anything at first, instead just watching. He was still shaken up from the encounter he had just had. It was what he was here to talk about.

"You alright?" Cartman asked. He yawned and checked the time on his phone before reaching over and flipping on his bedside lamp.

Kyle flinched with the sudden brightness but indoor lights didn't seem to bother his sensitive eyes any longer. "I talked to somebody tonight," he said, finally.

"A therapist, I hope," Cartman said, rolling his eyes.

"No," said Kyle. "His name is Diego."

"Diego," Cartman repeated in an exaggerated accent. "Who the fuck is Diego?"

"The guy that tried to kill us last weekend," Kyle said, barely audible.

"What!?" Cartman exclaimed. "Are you serious?" He sat up on his knees, eager for more information.

"You were right," Kyle said in a tremulous voice.

"No way! For real? About the vampire thing? Are you sure?"

"Yeah," Kyle said. He swallowed. "He was pretty convincing."

"You've gotta tell me everything," Cartman insisted. "So stop being moody and vague for a minute and tell me about it."

Kyle tensed and untensed his jaw. "He didn't mean to turn me," he said. "It was because I bit him back. That's how it works. A vampire bites you and then you have to drink some of the vampire's blood and then you have to die and then you're a vampire."

"Wait, hold on. You died!? When?"

"When I hit my head, I guess!"

"What else did he tell you?"

Kyle sat down on the edge of Cartman's desk and put his face in his hands. "So much stuff. I'm still... I'm still processing it..." He shook his head. "I'm glad he found me to tell me what to expect and to apologize for everything but still. It's a lot."

"The bastard apologized to you? What about me! I have twenty-four stitches!" Cartman held up his shirt for emphasis and there they were. The twenty-four stitches. Right where they had been for the past week.

"I mean, he was actively trying to kill *you*. I just got in the way."

"WHAT!? Why me!? What did I ever do!?" yelled Cartman, far too loud for two in the morning.

"Blood. You have more..." He looked Cartman up and down for a second. "Person. More person means more blood. He was trying to stay away from humans and starve himself to death but I guess we were at the wrong place at the wrong time and he couldn't help himself."

Cartman scoffed. "That's bullshit. That's fatphobia, is what it is. I was the target of a hate crime."

"Oh, shut up," Kyle said.

Cartman let out an irritated huff and crossed his arms. "So now you're a vampire then, huh? I didn't know there could be Jewish vampires."

"I don't think I can be. Like, religiously," said Kyle. "I mean, I still *am* but I feel like God might take issue with the morality of the whole thing." He ran his fingers through his hair. "I, personally, take issue with the morality of the whole thing, so I figure God also has to be pretty pissed."

"Do you at least get superpowers out of the deal?" asked Cartman. "Please tell me you at least get superpowers."

"I think so. Technically. Not that I have any idea how to do any of it. I'm supposed to be faster and stronger and stuff like that. Diego even said something about hypnosis and levitation or something but I don't know how to do it. Any of it. I don't need to sleep or eat or even breathe but I don't know how to stop doing any of those things. I'm just... still me." He buried his face in his hands again with a groan. "Except for I have to drink human blood if I want to live." He sniffed. "I don't want to kill anybody!"

"Well," Cartman said, and Kyle could see the gears turning in his brain, "how *much* blood do you need to drink?"

"Not every day, I don't think," said Kyle.

"So do you think, hypothetically, you could drink a couple pints a week to get by?"

"I really don't know," Kyle said, pursing his lips. "I should have asked Diego more questions but, you know, it was a lot to take in at the time."

Cartman grabbed his phone off the nightstand. "Hold on. I've gotta Google something."

Kyle cocked an eyebrow. "Okay?" He watched Cartman doing mental calculations. Cartman was pretty smart, although Kyle hated to admit it.

"Okay," Cartman said after a minute. "I think this could work."

"You think *what* could work?"

"That you can have some of my blood," Cartman said.

Kyle looked a little stunned. "Huh?" he stammered. He narrowed his eyes. "Okay, what's the catch?"

"What catch? Why would there be a catch?" Cartman asked, batting his eyelashes innocently. "You Jews. Always suspicious when I'm trying to be a good friend and help you out."

"Cartman," Kyle said, sternly. "I know you."

"You'll just owe me a favor later. Don't worry about it," said Cartman, waving his hand, dismissively.

Kyle frowned. He really didn't trust Cartman, and for good reason. But the idea was tempting. Even the thought of it was bringing his attention back to the nagging thirst in the back of his mind.

"I don't know," he said.

"Come on," said Cartman. "I'm helping you out here. More person, more blood. You said it yourself."

"What if I can't stop?" Kyle asked after a long pause. "Once I get started." As much as he couldn't stand Cartman a lot of the time, he didn't want him to die and he *especially* didn't want to be the one who accidentally killed him while he was doing him a favor.

"I'll handle it," said Cartman, he flexed his biceps for emphasis.

Kyle snorted. "This is a bad idea," he said.

"It's a great idea."

"It's a really bad idea." Kyle stood up and huffed, pacing around the room a bit. "Are you sure about this?"

"Totally," said Cartman. He scooted to the edge of the bed. "Come on."

Kyle tentatively sat down on the bed, next to him, sighing softly. "Give me your wrist. I don't want to go straight for the neck unless I know what I'm doing."

Cartman held out his arm with a smirk, watching intently as Kyle talked himself through it in his head. "What are you so afraid of?"

"Killing you, asshole!" Kyle barked. "Now shut up so I can focus." He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, bringing Cartman's forearm to his mouth. He could smell the blood in his veins, through his skin, and he sensed Cartman's pulse quicken as he ghosted his lips across his wrist. He felt like maybe Cartman was almost afraid of him.

"What are you doing?" Cartman asked, sounding a little nervous.

"Trying to find a vein," Kyle mumbled against his skin. He leaned back a bit and licked his lips. "I don't want to bite you too hard. And let me know when you want me to stop."

"Yeah, whatever," said Cartman.

Kyle let out another little sigh and pressed Cartman's wrist against his mouth once more, this time opening his mouth and sinking his teeth in, just a little. Cartman flinched slightly and let out a small sound of discomfort but said nothing else and warmth began to trickle into Kyle's mouth.

As soon as the first drop hit his tongue, Kyle was gone.

When he thought about drinking blood, he assumed it would taste like how he remembered when he was human. Salty and metallic. It was still salty and metallic but it was also mildly sweet and as rich as butter. It was as refreshing as water and as filling as any food he had ever eaten and he wondered how he had ever survived without it before then.

He continued to drink, almost frantically, as his body and mind warred against each other. He wanted to be cautious and mindful of how much he was drawing into his mouth but, at the same time, it was everything his body craved and needed in an almost lustful way. He let out a small whimper, chest heaving, against Cartman's skin, digging his unusually sharp fingernails into his forearm as he held it close to his mouth. He was unsure of how much blood he had consumed but, by then, he had all but forgotten Cartman was even alive until he exhaled a low moan and he tugged at Kyle's sleeve with his fingers.

"Hey," Cartman said, sounding a little gruffer than usual. "Pretty sure you're killing me right now."

Kyle forced himself to pull back, gasping. It took every ounce of willpower in his body to keep from diving back in but he pushed Cartman away from him, quickly, jumping to his

feet, gripping the back of Cartman's desk chair with so much force that he left deep scratches in the wood.

"Hey," Cartman said again from behind him, where he still sat on his bed. "You good?"

Kyle took another moment to compose himself before turning around. When he did, his eyes were glowing brightly in an unmistakably supernatural way. His pupils were huge and dilated and his cheeks were flushed with pink for the first time in a week. His lips were red from both friction and the blood, which still trickled out of the corner of his mouth. He was aware that he looked crazy. He felt crazy. He swallowed and his mouth still tasted of blood.

"I'm fine," Kyle managed to say, his voice coming out slightly strangled. He cleared his throat and took a deep breath, letting it out slowly. "Are you okay?" he asked.

"Uh, yeah," said Cartman, inspecting his wrist. It didn't hurt and the wound wasn't deep and, in fact, the bleeding was already steadily slowing to a halt. He wrapped it in a dirty t-shirt that hung on his bedpost to sop up any residual blood and to help dull the scent for Kyle's sake.

Kyle had finally calmed down enough to feel anything other than bloodlust for a moment. He realized, almost immediately, that the aching thirst in his throat had almost disappeared. He hadn't noticed just how sickly he had felt beforehand until then. The blood, it seemed, had made him feel much better. He let out a sigh of relief.

"Thanks, Cartman," he said.

"Don't mention it," said Cartman. "We can do this again in a couple days, if you want."

Kyle quirked an eyebrow. "You want me to do it again?"

Cartman shrugged. "Not gonna lie, it's kind of a rush. I'm not trying to sound gay or anything but getting your blood sucked by a vampire is pretty cool."

Kyle made a face. "Don't make it weird."

"I'm not making it weird," said Cartman. "I'm just No Homo-ing it for your convenience!"

"Well, then, stop saying things that need a No Homo addendum!" Kyle huffed. He wiped a stray smudge of blood from the corner of his mouth with his thumb. "But, yeah. Okay. I want to do that again." He more than wanted to. He needed to.

He glanced out the window at the night. "I should go," he said.

"Dine and dash, I see," said Cartman with faux annoyance.

"Yeah, well, you're like a McDonald's to me now. Fast food or whatever," said Kyle, hiding a smirk.

Cartman laughed and then looked serious, scouring Kyle's face for something he couldn't seem to find.

"What?" Kyle asked.

"You don't act like a vampire," said Cartman.

"Well, I've been a vampire for all of-" he pretended to check a watch on his wrist that wasn't really there- "one week. What do you expect a vampire to even act like? In this day and age, that is."

"I don't know! Brooding and castles and capes and shit," Cartman said.

"I'll get there when I get there," said Kyle. "I'm a vampire for the modern era."

"Do you have to sleep in a coffin?" asked Cartman.

"No."

"Can you turn into a bat?"

"No."

"Did you even *ask*?" Cartman scoffed.

"No!" said Kyle. He heaved the window open. "I'm leaving." He hoisted one leg out the window but then hesitated and went back inside. "Listen, real talk for a second."

"Listening," said Cartman.

"I'm not supposed to tell anyone about this. About me," said Kyle. "Can you at least try to keep it to yourself?"

"Yeah, yeah," said Cartman. "I can keep a secret. Not that I'll need to because you're the most obvious person on the planet but sure."

"You just said I didn't act like a vampire!" Kyle exclaimed. "The only reason you figured it out is because I told you I almost killed everybody at prom!"

"I mean, you're gonna tell Stan, at least," Cartman said. It was a reasonable assumption. Kyle and Stan shared almost everything.

Kyle pursed his lips for a moment. "No," he said. "I'm not gonna tell Stan." Knowledge of the supernatural felt like a burden and Kyle didn't want to give it to Stan to bear. He was his best friend, after all, and he wanted to let him live a normal life. Cartman, on the other hand, Kyle was glad to pull down the rabbit hole with him. It's not like Cartman had anything better to do, anyhow.

"That'd be a first," said Cartman. "I'll believe it when I see it."

Kyle scoffed and maneuvered his legs out the window again, easing his torso out, resting in the window frame on his elbows, forearms folded in front of him. Climbing in and out of windows was much easier, he realized, now that he was undead.

"I'll see you on Monday," he said.

"Yeah, see you Monday. I'm going the fuck back to bed," said Cartman, flopping back down on his mattress and pulling the covers up to his chin. "You're the lamest vampire I've ever met," he added for good measure.

Kyle snickered and then dropped, silently, to the ground.

Bloodletting

"Hurry up," Kyle hissed, his back pressed against the door of the janitor's closet, glaring at Cartman with glowing, green eyes piercing through the low light.

"Chill out. I'm doing this out of the goodness of my heart so don't rush me," Cartman retorted, unzipping his black hoodie, shrugging it off of his shoulders. He glanced at Kyle with his arms crossed, tapping his toe, impatiently. "You really need it, huh?"

"Shut up," growled Kyle. He tore open a large gauze bandage with his dagger-like canines and handed it to Cartman.

"Somebody gets cranky when he doesn't get a snack," Cartman teased, taking his sweet time deciding which arm to bare. The scar on his right wrist had already begun to fade to white, thanks to the regenerative properties of vampire venom, apparently.

It had been almost a week since Kyle had first fed on Cartman's blood and the gnawing hunger and thirst was beginning to distract him from his daily life. He knew vampires didn't need to drink blood daily but weekly was pushing it for him. They had planned for Kyle to come over on Saturday night but it was Friday morning at school and he couldn't wait any longer.

He was aware that pulling Cartman into an empty janitor's closet before first period seemed a little sketchy and, under normal circumstances, he would have been worried about rumors that might start because of it. Right now, though, he didn't care. The only thing on his mind was blood.

Finally, Cartman chose his left wrist and offered it to Kyle with a resigned sigh. "Bone app the teeth," he said.

Once again, Kyle searched for a vein with his lips and Cartman shuddered a little bit, the dark hair on his arm bristling with goosebumps, and Kyle could smell his heart rate pick up like before.

"Are you afraid of me?" Kyle asked against the skin of his wrist, glancing up at him quickly.

Cartman snorted. "No, stupid ass," he said. He looked unsure for a moment. "But do you really have to, like, make out with my arm before you bite me?"

Kyle scoffed. "I need to find the right place to do it!" he huffed. "Just fucking relax for a minute." He glanced up at him again for a fraction of a second. "No homo or whatever."

"Yeah, no homo," said Cartman. "Just get it over with."

Kyle let out an irritated sigh and pierced through the soft skin with his teeth, instantly getting a rush of dopamine as soon as he tasted blood. It was almost euphoric, in a way, and he tried

to keep the thrill divorced from Cartman, in his mind, for his own sanity. He could almost taste the adrenaline coursing through Cartman's veins, though.

Cartman had always been a bit of an adrenaline junkie with a flare for the dramatic so he gladly assumed his role as a willing donor for Kyle's supernatural appetite. It was a thing of teen romance novels and lame TV shows, both of which Cartman was secretly a fan of. It was a world he wanted to be a part of, much more so than Kyle.

Once Cartman began to feel a little dizzy, he nudged Kyle with his elbow to signal him to stop. It took a few jabs before Kyle acknowledged it, though. Finally, he pulled back, flushed and panting, dark red blood seeping from between his parted lips, his eyes vividly bright and shining.

Cartman slapped the gauze bandage over the wound, masking the scent of blood and keeping it from making a mess. "You get enough?" he asked.

Kyle made a groggy, non-specific sound, turning around and pressing his forehead to the cool, cement wall. "Gimme a minute," he muttered, quietly, pinching his eyes shut, tightly.

"*I'm* the one who just got his blood drained and *you* need a minute?" Cartman asked, a bit incredulously.

"Shut. Up," Kyle growled. He swallowed, digging his fingernails into the concrete. "I'm trying... to make sure I'm not going to kill you. Or somebody else." He took in a long breath and let out a whooshing exhale. He turned around, finally. "Okay, I'm good."

Cartman quirked an eyebrow at him. "You sure?"

"Yeah," Kyle said. He cleared his throat and wiped his mouth on the back of his hand. "I'm fine. Thanks." The murderous urges had passed without incident and he was already feeling better now that he had blood in his system.

Cartman rubbed his arm through the bandage. Like before, it didn't really hurt. It stung a bit and felt tingly but it didn't bother him. He pulled his jacket back on. "Yeah, whatever." He eyed Kyle carefully. "You *sure* you're okay? You're not gonna slaughter your whole math class or something, are you? I mean, I wouldn't be too torn up about it, personally. I think it would be pretty dope."

"Yeah, I'm sure," Kyle said, flatly. He adjusted the beanie on his head. "Do I look human?"

"Eh," Cartman said with a shrug. "Cool it with the glowing eyes and you'll be good."

Kyle blinked a few times. He wasn't really sure *how* to turn that off, if he was being honest. It took a few minutes of intense concentration but he finally willed the fierce glow down to a low luminescence that just fell into the outer cusp of the uncanny valley. "How's that?"

"Better," said Cartman. "I mean, I still think you kind of look like a vampire but I don't think anybody else is going to automatically jump to that conclusion."

Kyle sighed. "Thanks."

"No problem," Cartman said with a wink, zipping his hoodie back up.

Kyle grabbed his backpack off of the ground where he had thrown it in his initial frenzy and opened the door, peeking his head out. Luckily, the halls seemed to be empty and he quickly slipped out, followed by Cartman.

Cartman sidled up next to him as they walked through the empty hallway, hiking his backpack up over his shoulder.

"I can't believe Mr. Valedictorian missed an entire week of school *and* he's going to be late to class," Cartman taunted.

Kyle rolled his eyes. "We graduate in a couple of weeks. I think I'll live."

Cartman shook his head and tsked. "Still, Kyle, I can't believe you're missing... What class do you have now?"

"History."

"I can't believe you're missing *history class* to hang out in a *janitor's closet* with me!" Cartman jeered with a smirk, bumping into Kyle with his shoulder.

"You think you're really funny, don't you? Don't you think you should try to be a little more cautious? Considering I can end your life at any moment," Kyle said, glaring at him, half-lidded, as they turned a corner.

Unfortunately, they ran right into Kenny. He looked peculiarly between the two of them. "What are you guys doing?" he asked. It was especially odd to see Kyle and Cartman hanging out together by themselves. Kyle, in particular, tried to avoid it as much as possible.

"Nothing!" Kyle yelped, startled, realizing in hindsight how suspicious that sounded. He could feel the unusual heat in his cheeks from his feeding.

"Skipping class, duh," said Cartman. "What are *you* doing?"

"Skipping class," Kenny said, cracking a toothy grin.

"Atta boy," Cartman said, plopping a hand down on top of Kenny's head, ruffling his sandy blonde hair. "Come on, I'm gonna go smoke in the bathroom. You coming?"

"Yeah, sure," said Kenny, fishing his Juul out of his pocket.

Cartman glanced at Kyle. "You coming too, Jew?"

"No," said Kyle. "I'm going to history class."

Cartman snickered. "Okay, loser."

Kyle pursed his lips and turned, heading the opposite direction, hoping he wasn't too late for the lesson.

The next Friday, Kyle was hungry again. It was an awful feeling, he thought. Worse than hunger for food. He could still eat food and it helped take the edge off but the need for blood was still there. It was always there.

He had plans to come to Cartman's window that night for a quick bite but it had been several days since they discussed it and he wanted to make sure that Cartman remembered. It wasn't that he was opposed to showing up without invitation, he just figured it would be courteous.

School had let out for the day and the student body was loitering around, as usual, waiting for the buses to arrive. Cartman was sitting on the edge of a concrete planter when Kyle walked up to him.

"Hey," Kyle said, shoving his hands into the pockets of his jacket, rocking back on his heels. He had his sunglasses on but pushed up to his forehead and his hood up, casting as much shadow over his face as he could. Luckily, the sky was dark and cloudy so his eyes weren't stinging too bad.

"Hey," Cartman replied, taking out one of his earbuds, looking up at him. "What's up?"

"Is tonight still okay?" Kyle asked.

Cartman raised his eyebrows and smirked. "Needy much?"

Kyle frowned. "It's a yes or no question, dickhead," he growled.

"Fine, if it'll get the stick out of your ass," said Cartman. "You can come over whenever; I don't care. Except *maybe* not while I'm trying to fucking sleep this time."

Kyle rolled his eyes. "That's not even why I came over that time and you know it."

Cartman shrugged. "Whatever."

Kyle exhaled noisily through his nose. "I'll come over after dinner."

"Alright," said Cartman. "You wanna play Diablo III after?"

"Might as well," Kyle said.

"Cool, cool," Cartman said. He heaved himself up from where he was sitting and flicked the chestnut hair out of his eyes. "I'll see you later, then. I'm gonna go bully Butters."

"Have fun with that," Kyle said, watching him leave. He almost laughed as he saw Cartman hold up a hand to give Butters a hi-five and then snatched it away at the last second, then grabbing the poor kid in a headlock.

"Hey," Stan said, suddenly appearing beside Kyle, having overheard some of the exchange.

"Oh, hi," said Kyle.

Stan chewed idly at his thumbnail, looking like he had something on his mind and Kyle raised an eyebrow at him.

"What?"

"What's going on with you and Cartman?" Stan asked.

Kyle's face would have flushed if he wasn't currently so, well... undead. "Wh-what do you mean?" he stammered.

Stan shrugged. "I dunno. You guys are just... You're all buddy-buddy now. It's weird, isn't it?" he observed.

Kyle swallowed. "I don't think it's... Well, it's not... I mean... Don't worry about it."

Stan snorted. "Don't worry about it? I'm just saying! You couldn't stand each other a couple of weeks ago and ever since prom you're hanging out all the time."

"I wouldn't say we're hanging out *all* the time," said Kyle. "It's just... I don't know!"

Stan gave him a gentle, disbelieving look. "Kyle. Come on. I'm your best friend. You can tell me about it."

"Nothing's going on!" said Kyle, his voice shooting up an octave. "I don't know what you want me to say about it! We're friends, I guess!"

"Kyle, you guys left prom together! It's a little obvious," said Stan.

Kyle was very nearly speechless. "What!? You don't think we're... What!? No!" he sputtered. He couldn't believe what Stan was insinuating. "God, no! No way!"

"I'm just telling you what Kenny thinks," said Stan. "And, I mean, it's a little sus."

"What does Kenny think!?"

"He thinks you guys are like... a thing," Stan said with a facial expression that suggested that he believed it too.

"Well, we're not!" Kyle yelped, defensively. He sighed deeply. "Look. I don't know what's going on. It's not what you think, though."

"Then what is it?" asked Stan.

"Look, Stan," said Kyle, putting a hand on Stan's shoulder. "You're my best friend and I love you and I want to be honest with you but... But it's not my place to say."

He wanted to tell Stan about everything, he really did. He knew he couldn't, though, for his own good. And he knew that he was spending a lot of time with Cartman lately and he knew that it looked strange to people that knew them. The question, in itself, was kind of loaded

because there wasn't really anything Kyle could say. The truth was too dangerous and he didn't want to lie. Not to Stan.

Stan didn't seem to like that answer.

Stan frowned, shrugging away from Kyle's grip. "Dude. Really?"

"What?"

"It's not your place to say? That's what you're gonna say to me?"

Kyle scoffed, bitterly. He couldn't believe that Stan was so offended by his lack of a solid answer. "There's nothing else *to* say! There's nothing going on that you need to be concerned about so why don't you just stay out of it!" he spat. He was aware that he wasn't being the most level headed person on the planet but he was hungry and irritable and Stan needed to just let it go. He knew that the anger boiling in his chest was a trigger for the inhuman glow that tended to beam from his eyes when he felt anything strongly so he flicked his aviator sunglasses back down over his eyes to mask the incandescence.

"That's bullshit and you know it," Stan all but shouted.

"It's for your own good," Kyle said in a low growl. "There are some things you just don't need to know."

"Don't come at me with that martyr shit again, Kyle," snarled Stan. "I don't know what the fuck your deal has been lately but I'm sick of it."

Kyle felt something bubbling up inside of him and was appalled when he realized it was the urge to maul and maim and kill. It was the need for blood. Quickly, he turned on his heel. He needed to get away from Stan or anyone else before he snapped.

"Where are you going?" Stan asked, angrily.

"Go fuck yourself," Kyle snapped over his shoulder. He knew it wasn't the right thing to say but he needed to say something or anything that kept Stan from following him.

He walked home from school with shaking hands.

He didn't come down from his room for dinner when his mother called him later that evening, either. He was starving but not for food. It was all unappetizing to him. He made an excuse about having gotten something to eat with friends after school and sulked in his room for another hour or so before heading over to Cartman's house.

He knocked on the front door this time, a frown seemingly permanently plastered on his face since his exchange with Stan that afternoon.

Cartman answered and looked down at Kyle with his scowling face and crossed arms.

"What are you so pissed off about?" Cartman asked.

Kyle pushed past him, into the entryway. "It's not important," he grumbled.

"I wish vampires couldn't come in without being invited, like in stories," Cartman said, shutting the door behind him.

"Yeah, well, I wish a lot of things about vampires," Kyle spat. He hurried up the stairs and sat down on Cartman's bed, watching him as he came in and shut the bedroom door as well.

"Come on," Cartman said, leaning against the wall. "You might as well tell me what's got your vagina all sandy. No way you're sucking *my* blood if you're looking so... murder-y."

"Murder-y," Kyle repeated in a mocking tone. He let out a frustrated sigh. "Stan's up my ass about everything so I told him to fuck off."

Cartman snorted. "Really? *You* told *Stan* to fuck off? What for?"

"You really don't want to know."

"Now I really wanna know."

"No," said Kyle, "you *really* don't."

"Hm. No blood until I get answers," said Cartman.

Kyle scoffed. "Are you serious? Come on." He paused. "You know I could do it, whether you like it or not," He said. His voice was low and threatening but Cartman just grinned.

"But you won't."

Kyle was on his feet in an instant, right in front of him, eyes glowing and nostrils flared. Cartman, though, still towered over him with an amused smirk. They stared each other down for a moment before Kyle gave a resigned sigh and turned away.

"That's what I thought," said Cartman, crossing his arms over his chest. "So, tell me. You wouldn't tell Stan to fuck off if it wasn't important."

"Kenny and Stan know somethings up," said Kyle, rubbing at his temples.

"Told you you were obvious."

"They don't know about the vampire thing," Kyle murmured. "They think something *else* is up. With us. Me and you."

Cartman furrowed his brow. "Huh?"

Kyle sighed, loudly. "Don't make me say it."

Cartman let out a bubbly laugh. "Wait, so, they think we're *fucking*!?"

Kyle groaned and flopped back onto the bed, pressing his hands to his eyes. "It's not funny!" he exclaimed. "It's a serious disrespect to my character!"

Cartman continued to laugh. "Are you kidding me? That's hilarious."

"We've hung out like, what? Four times without them in the last couple of weeks at max and *that's* the conclusion they've jumped to?" Kyle muttered. "It's insulting, is what it is."

"Well, what'd you tell him?" asked Cartman. "Or did you just tell him to fuck off and leave?"

"I told him we're not!" said Kyle. "Obviously!"

"You should have told him he was right," Cartman said, with a wry grin. "That would have got him off your back right away, huh?"

Kyle made a disgusted face. "Please. I'd rather have the whole world know I'm a vampire than have one person think that I'm sleeping with *you*."

"Ouch!" Cartman said with a snort. "Aw, come on, Kyle. I know you want me. You can't get enough of my blood, for starters."

"That's it," Kyle said, sitting up. "I don't want it anymore. I'm not hungry. Goodbye." He got to his feet.

"Hold on," Cartman said, putting up his hand to block Kyle from leaving. "You're gonna drink it and you're gonna like it."

"Oh, make me," Kyle scoffed, hands on his hips.

"Alright, then," said Cartman. He turned and grabbed a pocket knife out of his desk drawer, flicking it open with dexterity. "If you don't, you're just gonna be all pissy forever until you snap and kill your brother at the dinner table or something."

"Wait, whoa, what are you doing?" asked Kyle, taking a step back. He watched, with fixed gaze, though, as Cartman rolled up the sleeve of his sweatshirt.

Cartman brought the blade to his wrist, eyeing it up and making a rough estimate, then pressing it firmly into his skin, drawing a short line through the flesh. Almost instantly, crimson blood rose to the surface of his skin and welled up into fat droplets, rolling down his arm. "There," he said, with finality. "Now you don't even need to find a vein."

Kyle caught the scent immediately and his pupils were wide and dark. His breathing hitched in his chest but he forced himself back, gripping onto the bedpost, trembling violently. "I don't need it," he managed in a quiet, strained voice.

"Don't be stupid, of course you do," said Cartman. He ran his finger through the blood, tapping it between his fingers. "I'm doing this for you so you might as well just take it."

He stepped forward and, in turn, Kyle took another step away, falling back onto the bed with a whimper. He needed it; he knew he did. But, still he refused, mostly out of spite and a little because Cartman was making it too easy. There was thrill in the bite and the yielding of flesh beneath his teeth. Although, it was tantalizing to watch the blood dribble from a cut and it made his mouth water.

Cartman sat down next to him on the bed, offering him his arm. "Just take it," he said, his voice low and rumbling. "It's for your own good."

It was too much then and Kyle lurched forward, taking his arm, swiftly, and latching onto it with his lips, drawing the blood into his mouth with a helpless moan. He quickly relaxed as a wave of something adjacent to ecstasy washed over him.

"See?" said Cartman, watching as Kyle drank, flinching slightly as Kyle's keen-edged fangs still poked, lightly, into his skin. "Was that so bad?"

After a few more gulps, Kyle pulled back, sitting up and covering his mouth with his hand. He swallowed, his eyes screwed shut, taking a few deep breaths to steady himself. He dragged his thumb across his lower lip, wiping away any blood that had accrued there. He cleared his throat and glanced up at Cartman with his eyes so bright they were almost a neon green.

"Thanks," he said, gruffly.

Cartman rolled his eyes. "Whatever. You make it so hard to be nice to you, sometimes."

Kyle exhaled a laugh through his nose. "You're one to talk." He shook his head in disbelief, sighing and pinching the bridge of his nose. "What a fucking day this has been."

"You wanna talk about it?" Cartman asked.

"No," said Kyle.

"Okay," Cartman said. He got up and disappeared for a moment, returning with his arm hastily bandaged. He flopped down in his desk chair and flipped on his TV with the remote, grabbing two Xbox controllers and tossing one to Kyle.

Kyle caught it one-handed and watched Cartman turn on the console, bringing up the Diablo III title screen.

Things felt so normal, Kyle thought, despite everything falling to pieces around him. Lots of things had changed and were changing but some things would always be the same.

"Do you think it was a bad idea to yell at Stan?" Kyle asked after a while.

Cartman shrugged, not looking away from the screen as they played. "Maybe. I don't know," he said. "I'm sure he'll get over it, though."

"Yeah," Kyle said, quietly, almost to himself.

He glanced out the window at the sky. The sun had almost disappeared on the horizon, leaving only streaks of yellow and orange in the hazy sky to be remembered by. Then, he glanced back at Cartman. He was completely focused on sorting through his inventory in the game and the setting sun made his eyes shine and his hair look dark gold. Kyle had to wonder what Cartman got out of this arrangement, other than the sheer drama of it all. And, then, he

thought of Stan and wondered what in the world it was that Stan thought Kyle could possibly see in Cartman.

It had been a stressful day but Kyle was beginning to feel a little better. He blamed it on finally getting sustenance but he knew that wasn't entirely it. And he wondered, in abject horror, if maybe Stan was right and he was sleeping with Cartman- metaphorically, that is. Was this the vampiric equivalent of a hook up? There were similarities, that was for sure: the intimacy and emotional satisfaction, for starters.

He swallowed hard and repressed those thoughts as deeply as he could into the back of his mind and put his attention back on the game.

That's all he really could do, at the moment.

Never So Much Blood

Kyle felt a little stunned as he stared down at the diploma in his hand as he followed Token off the auditorium stage. He took his seat and looked up just in time to see Cartman cross the stage in his dark green cap and gown, bowing dramatically and just generally acting like a fool. Kyle had no choice but to crack a grin.

Token turned to Kyle and leaned over towards him, elbow on the armrest between their seats. "Hey, I'm having a party tonight," he said, keeping his voice hushed because of the ceremony. "You coming?"

"Uh, yeah, sure," said Kyle.

"Cool," Token said. "I told Cartman and Stan about it earlier but I figured I'd ask you in person since you and Stan are, well, you know."

Kyle wondered how word had spread so far about his recent fight with Stan. Stan still wasn't speaking to him and he fought the corners of his lips from turning into a frown. "Okay, thanks," he said.

"Yeah," said Token. "You can bring whoever you want. My parents said it's cool if we drink in the house as long as nobody drives. It's gonna be lit."

Kyle nodded. "Okay."

And, that's what lead to Kyle standing in front of his mirror at seven PM that evening, fixing his hair and trying to make himself look as normal as possible. This would be his last high school party, after all. He put a dark gray sweater over a white collared shirt and paired it with black jeans. He felt like he looked human enough. A little achromatic but still like himself. He reached for his beanie on the way out the door but opted, at the last minute, to leave it.

Token's house wasn't too far and, even though the evening was brisk, Kyle found that the cold hardly bothered him at all anymore. As he approached the stately manor, he could hear music and laughter before heading up the long driveway.

Kyle said hello to some of his classmates who were smoking out on the lawn as he passed, swiftly trotting up to the door. Inside, he was greeted by thumping bass and an amalgamation of fruity-smelling vape clouds. His sense of smell was so sensitive now that it was almost overpowering and he blinked a few times through the artificial fog. He assumed that Token's parents had either gone out of town or let him throw a party for graduation's sake. Either way, there were a lot of people there. Kyle recognized every one of them as members of his graduating class or underclassmen as well as a couple of alumni from previous years. Everyone seemed to be having a good time.

Kyle spied around quickly, looking for someone he knew well enough to hang around with. The first person he noticed was Kenny standing around with Butters, nursing a red Solo cup

of something suspicious that smelled like strawberries and hand sanitizer. Kyle caught his eye and he waved, beckoning him over.

"Hey," Kyle said, maneuvering through the crowd, standing next to him, against the wall.

"We finally did it!" Kenny exclaimed. As punctuation, he gestured to the graphic tee he had on under his orange and brown unbuttoned flannel. It read "FUCK COLLEGE" in big bold print letters. It wasn't entirely relevant but Kenny wasn't planning on going to college anyhow so it made sense.

"Yeah, thank god," said Kyle. It was quite a feat to graduate from South Park and there were moments where Kyle wasn't sure it was going to be able to happen. But, even vampirism wasn't able to stop him from getting his diploma, thankfully. He glanced around again. "Is Stan here?"

"I think so," said Kenny. "He and Wendy were making out on the couch like half an hour ago. Are you guys talking yet?"

"No," said Kyle. "That's why I'm asking. He avoided me at graduation but I'm hoping I can corner him in to talking to me here."

"I'll grab him from behind and hold him down while you talk," Kenny jokingly suggested.

Kyle smirked. "Yeah, thanks. That might, honestly, be what it comes to."

"What even happened there?" asked Kenny.

"I thought you knew?"

"Nah, man."

Kyle let out a long exhale. "Well..." He swallowed. "It's because of Cartman, really."

"Oh, god, are you guys really actually fucking?" Kenny asked, jaw dropped.

"No!" Kyle insisted.

Butters eavesdropped his way into the conversation at that point. "Wait, *who's* fucking Eric?"

"Nobody!" Kyle exclaimed, tossing his hands up in exasperation. "Nobody's fucking him and nobody ever *will* fuck him and that's that on that!"

Kenny laughed. "Harsh, dude."

Kyle shook his head and huffed. "Anyway, Stan doesn't believe me and basically called me a liar to my face and so I told him to go fuck himself or something and here we are." He crossed his arms and shifted his weight on his feet. "So, if you see him, could you tell him I'd like to speak with him. Thanks."

He turned curtly and stormed over to an empty love seat, sitting down and propping his elbow up on the arm. His phone buzzed in his pocket and he took it out and frowned. It was a text from Cartman.

"hey jew u going to tokens?"

Kyle sighed and quickly typed back a reply.

"Already here."

He shoved his phone back into his pocket and ignored it when it buzzed again, assuming it was Cartman again. That theory was proven correct when, just moments later, Cartman plopped down next to him with a beer in his hand.

"Hey, this party sucks," said Cartman. He was wearing a black denim jacket over a red shirt with dark jeans and his favorite pair of Timberland boots. His hair was styled differently than Kyle had ever seen it before.

"Yeah, hi," Kyle said. "Have you seen Stan?"

Cartman quirked an eyebrow. "No. Was I supposed to be looking for him? He kind of won't even look in my direction now considering he thinks-

"I don't care what he thinks," Kyle interrupted.

"Jeez, we just *graduated high school* and you've still got a massive stick up your ass. Can you relax for like two seconds or is this just how vampires are?"

Kyle glared at him. "Shut up!" he whispered harshly, glancing around to make sure no one overheard. "You wanna tell the whole world, fat ass?"

Cartman rolled his eyes. "I assure you, nobody here gives a shit what I'm saying to you right now so you can chill."

Kyle huffed and crossed his legs. "Whatever," he said. "Anyhow, now that we graduated, you're probably leaving South Park soon, huh?" He frowned at his own question, hating that there was some sort of disappointed feeling in his chest at the thought of Cartman leaving.

Cartman hummed to himself for a moment, slinging his arm up on the back of the sofa. "Nah. I've still got stuff to do around here," he said. "I'll stick around for the summer at least."

"Oh," said Kyle, feeling at least somewhat relieved. He chewed on his lower lip, losing himself in thought for a moment. Then, suddenly, he noticed Stan across the room in his black jeans and navy jacket over a gray t-shirt. He watched as he headed into the kitchen, figuring this was his chance to corner him into a productive conversation.

"I've gotta go talk to Stan," Kyle announced, getting to his feet.

Cartman raised his eyebrows skeptically. "Alright. Good luck with that," he said, bringing his drink to his lips.

Kyle hurried through the crowd, stopping in the kitchen doorway. Stan was there with his back to him, filling up two plastic cups with soda. Kyle let out a short breath through his nose.

"Hey," said Kyle.

Stan turned quickly to face him but then his face fell into a frown. "Oh. Hi."

"Look," said Kyle, sheepishly rubbing the back of his neck, "can we talk? Please?"

Stan pursed his lips. "I don't know. Do you want to talk?"

"Kinda," said Kyle.

"I mean, like, *really* talk. Don't lie to me."

"Stan, I'm not lying to you," Kyle said, almost pleading.

Stan shook his head. "Kyle, I know you. I know when you're being honest with me and you just haven't been." He sighed and looked down at the cups in his hands.

"What would I have to gain from lying to you?" Kyle asked. It was a rhetorical question but there was *lots* that he could gain from lying to Stan, actually.

"What's going on with Cartman?" Stan asked, firmly, setting his cups down and putting his hands on his hips.

Kyle groaned. "What does it *matter*?" he exclaimed. "This is between me and you. It has nothing to do with him. He's just... He's doing me a favor, okay? He's helping me out with something." He swallowed and hoped Stan would take that for an answer.

He didn't.

"If you need help with something, I can help you," said Stan.

"No, you really can't," Kyle insisted. He rubbed his brow, tensely, and then crossed his arms. "But is that it? Are you *jealous* that I'm spending time with somebody else?"

"No!" Stan snapped. "I'm just worried about you!"

"Well, you don't have to be!" Kyle yelped in defense. "I can take care of myself, Stan. Trust me."

"Oh, I'm sure you can," Stan said and there was venom in his voice. "You always do this. Ever since we were kids. You get close to Cartman and then you get hurt or pissed or you two end up almost killing each other and then I have to deal with it and I'm sick of it!"

Kyle scoffed. "I'm sorry I'm such a fucking *burden* to you, Stan," he growled. He was becoming acutely aware of the bloodlust swelling in his chest but he almost couldn't bring

himself to care. He knew his eyes must have begun to shine but hoped that the fluorescent kitchen lights were bright enough to drown it out.

"Don't put words in my mouth," said Stan. "That's not what I meant and you know it! You know what I mean because you do it all the time!"

Kyle didn't respond but stood, glowering, unable to speak because he was afraid of what would come out. Every second he stood there, he was losing a little more control over his rage. He shuddered slightly, gripping the fabric of his jeans with sharp fingernails. He pictured Stan in front of him, torn to shreds, in a pool of his own blood. He imagined the taste and it made his throat feel raw. He hated these thoughts but they kept coming, against his will.

Stan, unfortunately, continued.

"I'm sick of talking about this, Kyle," he said. He pinched the bridge of his nose and shook his head. "I don't know what's going on with you but you've changed. You're just pissed off all the time and you look like you want to kill somebody and you hang out with Cartman and I don't fucking get it. I don't."

Kyle clenched his jaw, nostrils flared, holding his breath to keep from catching a whiff of the blood that coursed beneath Stan's skin. "Maybe things are different now," he said, his voice sounding hoarse and raspy and hateful. "Maybe I've outgrown you."

He knew that was a horrible thing to say and he regretted it as soon as it left his lips. Stan looked immediately hurt but then his blue eyes darkened with anger.

"Go to fucking hell, Kyle," Stan spat.

Kyle took in one last sharp, shaky inhale and turned, quickly. He felt like he was going to explode. The urge to kill was overwhelming and thirst burned like fire in his throat. He glanced around the living room, looking for an exit but first, however, he spotted Cartman. His height made him easy to find, leaning up against the wall near the staircase, sipping his beer.

Kyle couldn't help himself from marching over there and grabbing him by the sleeve, pulling him towards the stairs.

"Hey," Cartman complained, stumbling a bit when Kyle jolted him forward. He followed him up the stairs, curiously. "I take it the Stan thing didn't go too well, then?"

Kyle shot him a dangerous, glowing glance. "No, it didn't go too well, actually," he snapped.

They reached the top of the stairs and Kyle opened the first door on his left. It was an empty guest room and he roughly pushed Cartman inside, locking the door behind them. He paced wildly back and forth, running his hands through his red hair.

"So, uh, what're we doin'?" Cartman asked, nervously bouncing up on the balls of his feet, setting his beer down on the vanity by the door.

"What do you think, dumbass?"

His eyebrow twitched and he leaned, suavely, against the door. "Why, Kyle, I always knew you wanted me but at *Token's house*? Tsk tsk, that's just *shameless*," he teased, smirking.

Kyle shot him daggers with his eyes. "Shut the fuck up," he warned. He paced some more, chewing at his thumbnail, other hand still anxiously in his hair, tangling his fingers in the curls. He swallowed painfully and looked at Cartman with desperation. "Cartman, I thought I was going to kill him."

"Jesus," said Cartman. "That bad, huh?"

Kyle nodded, quickly and wordlessly, pressing his knuckles to his lips. He looked like he wanted to crawl out of his skin. He sat down on the bed, restlessly bouncing his leg, still trembling with rage and fretfulness. Each breath he took felt like fire in his lungs.

Cartman sat down next to him. "You're jonesing for a fix," Cartman observed.

"You think?" said Kyle. He threw his head back and let out an agonizing sigh. "I need... to try something different," he said.

"How different?"

"I need more. I need it faster," Kyle mumbled, shaking his head. He looked up and studied Cartman's face carefully with his eyes. "Do you trust me?" he asked.

Cartman grimaced. "Oh no," he said.

"Do you *trust* me?" Kyle asked again. His eyes were sincere but glowing vividly.

"I mean, I guess so!" said Cartman, reluctantly. He pursed his lips. "Just don't kill me," he said.

"I'll try not to," Kyle said. He bit down on his own bottom lip, mentally mapping the veins under Cartman's skin. "Take off your jacket," he commanded.

Cartman gave him a wary look but did so and watched, waiting for Kyle to make the next move.

Kyle hummed hesitantly, knitting his eyebrows together. He got up on his knees on the bed, cautiously. "Just don't make it weird, okay?"

Cartman let out a nervous, forced laugh. "Uh, okay."

Kyle took a deep breath and let it out in a whooshing exhale, scooting closer on the bed. He reached out, wavering for a moment, and put his hand, gently but firmly, on Cartman's jaw, tilting his head at an angle. He leaned up and forward, just barely touching his neck with his mouth. He let out a soft, uneasy breath against the skin there and Cartman got goosebumps.

Kyle swallowed. "Hold still," he said. "I hope you brought a scarf."

Cartman let out a weak, faltering whimper as Kyle's soft lips ghosted along the sensitive skin of his neck and he almost saw stars when he sunk his sharp, pointed teeth into the throbbing vein there.

Kyle let out a soft groan of delight as blood filled his mouth. It came quicker and in greater volume than whenever he drank from Cartman's wrist. Arterial blood, he found, tasted far better than its venous counterpart. He could taste the alcohol in Cartman's blood as well and it drove him a little bit crazy. He held Cartman's jaw tighter, slipping his hand up to the nape of his neck and gripping him hard by the hair.

Cartman very soon found himself getting lightheaded. Although Kyle shotgunning his carotid artery like a can of Coors Light kind of gave him a rush of euphoria and adrenaline, he began to get dangerously woozy.

"Nngh," he moaned, sounding a little strangled. "I think I'm gonna pass out if you don't stop," he said.

Once again, Kyle didn't listen. Not on purpose. He was simply lost in a haze of consumption. He dug his nails in harder against Cartman's scalp, as if drawing him into himself.

"Kyle," Cartman choked out, struggling against his grip. Quickly and with great force, he grabbed a fistful of Kyle's auburn curls and pulled him back, off of his neck, forcefully flipping him onto his back, straddling his hips, pinning his wrists up above his head. "Jew!" he exclaimed, "Stop!"

In unintended retaliation Kyle let out a feral, inhuman snarl, frightening them both. Realizing, in horror, the sound that had just tore from his chest, Kyle let out a sharp gasp, frenzied eyes wide and pupils blown, glowing brighter than ever before, blood trickling out from between his parted lips.

Cartman still sat there, stooped over on top of him, holding him down and looking somewhere between shocked and captivated, wide chest heaving with heavy breaths. A thin stream of blood still oozed from the wound in his neck but, thanks to the effects of vampire venom, it was already beginning to slow to a stop.

Kyle stared up at him, bemused by the startled expression on his face, grounded by the weight of his body on top of him. They gazed at each other for a long while.

"I... I'm sorry," Kyle gasped, finally, breaking the loaded silence with a breathy whisper. His cheeks were pinker than they had been in weeks.

Cartman swallowed thickly and licked his lips. There was something unreadable in his expression, something voracious and electric. Suddenly, he must have realized that he was still straddling Kyle's waist and he swung his leg over and let him go, moving to sit on the edge of the bed.

"I don't think you were gonna stop," he said.

Kyle continued to lay there, staring up at the high, ornate ceiling. He wasn't sure what he was feeling but he got the impression that Cartman wanted something from him when he was pinning him to the bed and he didn't want to think about it. He also didn't want to think about what he wanted.

"I don't know," he said. He sat up and glanced over at Cartman. "Are you okay?"

"Oh, fine, fine," Cartman said. He picked his jacket up off of the floor and reached into the pocket, pulling out a yellow, wool scarf. "I did bring a scarf," he said, grinning.

"See? It's your lucky day," Kyle said, pulling his knees up under his chin.

"Or unlucky," said Cartman. "Considering you almost *killed* me!"

"I said I was sorry!" Kyle exclaimed. He paused for what seemed like a very long time before he spoke again. "This... This isn't sustainable... Is it?"

Cartman shrugged "I mean, probably not. I'm probably anemic now and you have no concern for my life or anything."

"I have concern for your life, you stupid piece of shit asshole!" Kyle snapped, scowling.

Cartman raised his eyebrows, a little surprised. "Huh. Okay, well, we'll just have to think of something else."

"There *is* nothing else," Kyle lamented. "The only thing I can do at this point is... I'm going to have to..." He hid his face in his hands and shook his head. "Ugh, I don't want to have to *kill* someone!"

Cartman jolted slightly in his seat, visibly having an idea that hit him like lightning. "Now, hold on," he said.

Kyle looked up. "What?"

"I might just have an idea," Cartman said. He stood, rising from where he sat, slinging his scarf around his neck and slipping his jacket back on, popping the collar.

"Oh no," Kyle groaned. "Where are you going?"

"I'll tell you tomorrow," said Cartman. "Can you meet me someplace?"

"I mean, I *guess* so," Kyle said, narrowing his eyes at him. "This better not get us in trouble."

Cartman rolled his eyes. "Oh, please," he scoffed. "You know me."

"Exactly," Kyle said, slowly.

Cartman headed for the door, unlocking it and then turned back to Kyle with his hand on the doorknob. He winked "I'll text you."

Purification by Fire

Leaves and twigs crunched under Kyle's brown boots as he tromped through the woods near Stark's Pond the next evening. Cartman still hadn't told him what he was meeting him all the way out here for and that didn't sit well with him. As he came upon a clearing he half expected to see Cartman standing there with a dead body or something. Fortunately, when Kyle saw him, he only had a backpack.

"Why are we doing this out here?" Kyle asked, walking across the clearing towards him, squinting at the twilight sky with his aviator sunglasses. "Couldn't we have done this at your house or something?"

Cartman shrugged. "My mom's home and she gets nosy," he said. "And, I figured you'd want to be away from *your* house in case, you know, you start questioning the legality of things or something gay like that."

Kyle pulled his lips into a tight frown. "Cartman, I hate the sound of that."

"Yeah, well, I did you yet another favor," said Cartman. "You're welcome in advance." He slung the backpack off of his shoulder. It seemed full and heavy.

Kyle almost couldn't look as he unzipped it. He pulled out something dark red and squishy and tossed it to Kyle. He caught it, reflexively, and hesitantly looked down at it. It was a blood bag marked B Positive.

"Cartman!" Kyle yelled. "Where did you get this!?"

Cartman dumped out his backpack and at least a dozen more fell out into the soft grass. "Oh, you know," he said, vaguely. "Hospitals are ridiculously easy to steal from."

"You *stole* them!?"

"Yeah, it's no big deal," Cartman said.

"It is a big deal!" shouted Kyle. "That's illegal! You're going to get arrested for stealing bodily fluids from the sick and needy!"

"Whatever," Cartman said, waving a dismissive hand. "They'll never miss 'em."

Kyle let out a huff through his nose but still gently squeezed the bag. The humanity in him wanted to throw it back in Cartman's face and refuse it altogether but his vampire side was intrigued and a little impressed and, as expected, the vampire side won.

"Well, go on," Cartman said, crossing his arms.

"How am I supposed to drink this?" Kyle asked, observing it, turning it at all angles. Tubes snaked out of it and he wasn't sure which opening was the correct one.

"Pop that sucker open like a Capri Sun," Cartman suggested, watching eagerly.

A pointed straw like in a Capri Sun would be helpful, Kyle noted to himself, and figured he'd have to find one if he was going to keep doing this. This time, however, he brought one of the tubes up to his mouth and tore the end off with his razor sharp teeth, sucking through it like a straw.

It was cold and thick and, when it hit his tongue, he made a face.

Cartman laughed. "Is it nasty?"

Kyle nodded, continuing to drink anyhow, finishing it quickly. When he was done, he stuck his tongue out, slightly disgusted. "You ever eat something that's gone stale? It's like that," he said. "And it's cold."

Cartman shook an ice pack in his direction. "You gotta keep 'em cold or they'll go bad," he explained.

"I know, but it tastes like ass," said Kyle. He shot Cartman a dirty look. "Don't even comment on that." He smacked his lips together, trying to get the taste of cold, stale blood out of his mouth. "It's not very filling, either," he complained. The blood bags were convenient, sure, but they didn't last very long and didn't give him the same rush that drinking even a fraction of fresh blood did. After drinking fresh, warm blood, he felt energized and alive. These just made him feel sluggish.

He neatly folded the empty plastic bag and shoved it deep into his jacket pocket.

"Hey, beggars can't be choosers," Cartman huffed, stuffing the rest of the blood bags back into his backpack, zipping it up and slinging it over his shoulder again. "They'll be in a mini fridge in my garage if you need one," he said.

Kyle nodded. "Thank you," he said, finally.

"Wow," said Cartman, voice ripe with sarcasm. "The great Kyle Broflovski finally thanked me for my hard work and dedication."

"Shut up," said Kyle. "I've thanked you for this shit lots of times already, asshole." He shoved his hands into his armpits. "It's not *my* fault you're being nice to me."

"That's the dumbest shit I've ever heard you complain about. And that's saying something," Cartman snorted. They started off through the clearing, back towards town.

"I just want to know why," Kyle said, almost softly.

Cartman's facade faltered for just a second but then he shrugged. "I said don't worry about it so don't worry about it. I'm gonna stop helping you if you keep asking me about it."

"It just doesn't make sense," Kyle muttered. "We hated each other for years and now you're... we're... It's weird! Stan was right that it's weird."

Cartman rolled his eyes. "I never hated you, you dumb Jew," he said. "You're just funny to pick on. Stop thinking so much about it." He glanced at him out of the corner of his eye. "Though, you probably can't help that, can you? You always overthink everything."

They made it to the outskirts of the woods. Cartman's pickup truck was there, parked in a patch of gravel. Kyle hadn't seen him drive it recently and almost forgot he *could* drive, let alone had his own vehicle. It was more than he could say about himself. He had a license but hadn't gotten around to getting his own car yet.

"You wanna ride?" Cartman offered, pounding his fist lightly on the dented hood of his truck. "Or does me being nice to you make you wanna puke?"

Kyle frowned. "I'll walk," he said.

Cartman scoffed. "Get in the fucking truck, douchebag," he commanded.

Kyle reluctantly obliged, climbing into the passenger's seat. Inside, it was surprisingly clean and well maintained. He snapped his seat belt on and crossed his arms over his chest.

Cartman got in as well and glanced over at him. "Relax, Jew," he said, turning the key and gripping the steering wheel.

"I am as relaxed as I can possibly be," said Kyle.

"If you say so," Cartman said, pulling out onto the main road. It was only a few minutes drive until he pulled into his driveway. "Come on," he said, killing the engine and getting out.

Kyle did, wandering around the side of the truck and leaning against the warm radiator, thumbs hooked in his belt loops. "What are we doing at your house?" he asked. "I thought your mom was home."

"Well, she's not here *now* so I don't know? Hanging out?" Cartman said, shrugging. "Not like you have any other friends anymore."

"Fuck you," Kyle said, following him into the garage anyhow. "I still have friends. I have... Kenny."

"You don't wanna hang out with Kenny," Cartman said opening up the old mini fridge that was plugged into the wall, getting on his knees to haphazardly unpack the blood bags from his backpack. He tossed one of them to Kyle. "Here, have another one."

Kyle caught it but looked at it disdainfully. He hesitated but still tore the tubing open with his teeth and drank it, quickly, trying to ignore the stale taste. He grimaced and shuddered a little, his stomach gurgled a little in protest. "Man, these suck." He crumpled up the empty plastic hid it and the other from his pocket under some trash in the garbage can. "Like, it was a good idea but, really, they're terrible."

Cartman rose to his feet, hands in his jacket pockets, giving a short sigh. "We need another plan, then."

Kyle frowned and hung his head slightly, looking a bit distraught. "I know what I have to do but I don't know if I can physically bring myself to do it," he muttered. He looked up. "I don't want to kill people, Cartman."

Cartman chewed thoughtfully on his bottom lip. Then, suddenly, he perked up, looking almost stunned by the genius of the idea that had just popped into his head. "What if..." he said, gears turning in his mind, "it was a really, really bad person."

Kyle quirked an eyebrow, looking skeptical. "I don't know, Cartman. That's super subjective."

"No, it's not," Cartman said. "What if it was a pedophile or one of those alt-right freaks? Would you say that those are objectively bad people?"

Kyle opened his mouth to protest but shut it, quickly, thinking.

Now, the thing about Kyle Broflovski was that he had always had a strong moral compass. This compass, however, unlike most people's, pointed in only two directions: Right and Wrong. Everything he agreed with was Right and anything he didn't was Wrong. He had always considered himself to be a person of outstanding judge of character. Most people would agree. Not all, but most. It was simple, really. Flawed, but simple. For Kyle, the world was Black and White. Right and Wrong. No gray area. Nothing in between.

"That," he said, slowly, "could work."

Cartman broke into a wide grin. "That's my Jew," he said, patting him firmly on the shoulder.

"I'm not your anything," Kyle said, flinching. "But how would this work? How are we going to be *sure* that people are... well... scumbags?"

Cartman snapped his fingers twice, pointing at him. "Excellent question. Now, if you'll follow me to my humble abode, I can show you."

And so, a few minutes later, Kyle was perched, cross-legged, on the edge of Cartman's bed, watching intently as he typed rapidly on his laptop.

"What are you doing?" Kyle asked.

"We're catfishing," Cartman said, shooting a look over his shoulder at him with a smirk.

"We are?"

"Uh huh," said Cartman, turning back to his project.

"We're catfishing... pedophiles?" Kyle asked, tilting his head a little.

"Yeah, a la To Catch A Predator," said Cartman. "We can use FaceApp to make a profile picture and then we can slap a 'No Children Were Harmed In The Making Of This Internet Scam' label on it." He typed some more. "Do you want to be the kid or do you want me to be the kid?"

"I don't want to be the kid!"

Cartman turned around in his seat, "Aw, come on, Kyle. You'd be such a cute little girl. I wouldn't even have to edit it that much."

"Fuck off," Kyle huffed.

"Fine, fine," Cartman said, pulling out his phone, bringing up the front facing camera. "I got diddled enough as a kid, might as well be the one to lure these fuckers in." He pouted his lips and did a peace sign with his fingers, taking a quick photo and then tapping around on his phone, editing it as he talked. "You know? Retribution and all that."

Kyle was almost speechless. "Wait, what? What happened when you were a kid?"

"Lots of shit," Cartman said, shaking his head.

"You never mentioned it before."

"Because it's fine. I figured it happened to everybody and, by the time I realized it didn't, it didn't matter anymore. I went over it in therapy. I'm good now," said Cartman. His tone was nonchalant but his eyes were dark and serious as he worked on his picture, not looking up from the screen.

"Do you... want to talk about it?" Kyle asked, feeling a little uncomfortable.

Cartman glanced up for just a second and then back down. "Uh, not really," he said. "I mean, I will if you really want me to but it's not, like, my favorite subject."

Kyle felt kind of like an ass for asking. "Okay," he said. "We don't have to."

Cartman continued anyhow. "I don't want to say it would have been fine if it was just one person but, I mean, if it wasn't, like, every other adult in my life, maybe things would have been different." He frowned down at his phone. "And, I'm saying it was literally everyone. Teachers. Strangers. My own fucking *mom*." He shook his head. "Lame as hell is what it is."

"Jesus, Cartman," Kyle said, quietly.

"It's fine. It's fine. I'm compartmentalizing or whatever," Cartman said, sounding more like he was trying to convince himself. "But you get why I think people who want to fuck kids should die, right?"

Kyle nodded, quickly. "Yeah, obviously."

"What about you?" Cartman asked. "You exacting any revenge on anyone?"

Kyle let out a long, whooshing exhale through his mouth, leaning back on his hands. "Oh, boy. Maybe."

"You always were self-righteous, Jew," Cartman said, giving him a small smile.

Kyle scoffed out a laugh. "Yeah, but it seems weird to be literally planning murders, don't you think?"

"Eh," said Cartman. "Think of it as purification by fire."

"I've always wanted to punch a fascist," Kyle mused. "This is just taking it one step further."

"There you go, then," said Cartman. He looked down at his phone screen one last time and chuckled. He held it up for Kyle to see. "What do you think? Takes you back, doesn't it?"

The picture was of Cartman but heavily edited with a FaceApp filter to look like a young girl. If Kyle squinted hard enough he could still see Cartman's features in the photo but, to an outsider, it didn't look suspicious at all. Kyle had to laugh though at the sheer absurdity of it all.

"Do you think making it a girl was a nice touch?" Cartman asked, grinning at his hard work. "I think I look pretty cute, don't you?"

"Yeah, fucking adorable," Kyle snorted.

"How old do you think I look there?" asked Cartman.

"Twelve or thirteen, maybe," said Kyle. He tried to remember what Cartman really looked like at twelve or thirteen.

"Alright," said Cartman, typing in the age on the profile he was creating, then, he sent the photo over from his phone, setting it as the profile picture. He leaned back in his chair, crossing his hands over his stomach, admiring his work. "And, we're live," he said.

Kyle skimmed the profile with his eyes. "What site is this even?"

"I dunno, some kind of chatroom," said Cartman. "But, what I've learned in my eighteen years of nonsense is that, where there are kids on the internet, there will be creepy adult men trying to hook up with them."

"Hm," Kyle said, crossing his arms. "What do we do once they message us?"

"We play dumb for a bit. We want to get them to admit it to us or at least be asking to meet up. Hopefully they drop their address but, if not, we've gotta find some way to doxx 'em."

"Oh, that's easy," Kyle said.

Cartman raised his eyebrows, seeming impressed. "Oh yeah?"

Kyle shrugged. "I mean, yeah. I figured out a couple of ways to decode anonymous users considering the *last* time we didn't know who somebody was on the internet it got way out of hand. I'm good with computers. You know I'm good with computers."

Cartman grinned and he almost seemed proud. "A hacker vampire is kind of the funniest concept ever," he said.

The corners of Kyle's mouth twitched up into a smirk. "Sounds like a Black Mirror character," he said. "You have a VPN, right? If the police can trace it back to us through this site, then-"

"Of *course* I have a VPN," Cartman huffed. "Do you know how much illegal shit I do on the internet? As far as the police will ever know, this laptop doesn't even exist."

"Okay, good," said Kyle.

He reclined back across the middle of Cartman's bed and, to his surprise, Cartman came and laid down next to him. They lay there together in companionable silence for a good while until Kyle spoke again.

"What do we do once we know who we're going to kill?"

"Well, I set the location to Denver since I figured we should stay out of South Park, so I guess we drive up there and do it, then," said Cartman.

"Yeah, but how?" asked Kyle.

Cartman shrugged. "You just do it. You go feral or whatever the hell you do."

"And the... the bodies?"

"Leave that to me," Cartman said. "I have a knack for making people disappear."

Kyle was glad he didn't go into detail. He was quiet again, going over the plot once more in his mind. "We're really gonna do this?"

"I guess so," said Cartman and, as if on cue, the computer chimed with a message. He sat up, quickly, and checked. He clicked his tongue. "This guy's pretty straightforward," he said, making a disgusted face.

"What does this mean for us, then?" Kyle asked, sitting up as well and cocking his head slightly.

Cartman looked back at Kyle with a wry grin. "We got one."

Kill Yourself

Kyle got back to his house after dinner time, slipping quietly in through the front door. He tried to make a beeline for his room but his mother caught sight of him on the stairs and yelled for him to come back down. He did so, with much reluctance.

"Bubbie," she said, tenderly, pursing her tight, red lips, as she stroked his face, gently. "Have you been feeling alright?"

"Yeah," Kyle stammered. "Yeah, I'm fine, Ma."

She narrowed her eyes, skeptically. She put the back of her hand on his forehead, testing his temperature. "You're freezing," she noted.

"Yeah, it's, uh, cold out tonight," Kyle lied, hoping she wouldn't go outside and check. It was actually a pretty mild evening for once.

"And you're white as a sheet," she continued. She tsked and started for the kitchen. Kyle knew he was meant to follow her. He did so but not before considering taking off up the stairs and locking himself into his room for the night.

In the kitchen, he leaned up against the counter as Sheila fussed around with dishes next to the sink. "You know, ever since you had that bug last month, you haven't been well, Kyle," she said, her back to him.

Kyle grimaced and hoped she didn't have eyes on the back of her head and didn't see. "I'm fine, really," he pleaded.

"You missed supper," she continued. "Let me fix you a plate."

"I'm not really hungry," said Kyle. He wasn't. Not for food. The blood he drank earlier quenched his unholy thirst temporarily but it was unsatisfying and made his stomach queasy.

Sheila turned again to face him. "I've hardly seen you eat anything this week," she protested. She shook her head. "I'll call and make a doctor's appointment for you next week," she said.

Kyle's heart sank. A doctor's appointment was bad news. At the doctor's there was no way of hiding his secret affliction. They would notice his frigid temperature or his pallid skin and want to run tests. And, he was pretty sure, there was something or other a test could find out that would give him away. He didn't expect his blood to be exactly normal and he was fairly certain vampirism was some sort of disease.

"N-no!" he blurted out. "I don't need a doctor's appointment!"

"You're nearly due for a checkup anyhow," she said, dismissively.

"But Mom-"

"No buts!" she said, holding up a hand to silence him. "Now, if you're not going to eat the dinner I made, at least make yourself a sandwich before you go to bed."

Kyle sighed. "Fine," he grumbled. "I'll do it later."

"Okay, Bubbie," said Sheila, pulling him down slightly so she could plant a wet kiss on his forehead before she went back into the living room where she had been knitting in front of the television.

Kyle turned and all but sprinted up the stairs, only to encounter his brother, Ike, in the hallway. Ike was only twelve but tall for his age, a shock of sooty black hair flopping into his eyes. He stood in the middle of the hall, drinking a juice box, narrowing his eyes at his older brother.

Kyle huffed. "What do you want, buttmunch?"

Ike took a long, purposeful sip of juice. "Nothing."

"Okay, get out of my way, then," Kyle snapped, attempting to dart past him.

Ike stepped in front of him again and Kyle threw his hands up, exasperated. "Dude, come on. I need to get to my room."

"You wanna play Minecraft?"

"No," Kyle said, flatly.

"Do you wanna play Fortnite?"

"No."

"Do you wanna play R-"

"No," Kyle cut him off.

Ike frowned. "Mom thinks you're doing drugs," he said, suddenly changing the subject.

Kyle scoffed. "She does *not*."

"Yuh-huh. I heard her talking about it with Dad yesterday," said Ike.

Kyle rolled his eyes. "Well, I'm not. Obviously."

Ike took another extremely drawn out sip from his juice box, drawing out every last drop until the straw made a horrible slurping sound. Kyle stared at him, blankly, as he continued to slurp for another good three or four seconds before he'd had enough of it. He grabbed the empty cardboard container out of his brother's hand and tossed it, hard, down the hall and against the wall.

Ike blinked. "I see how it is," he said.

"Lemme through or I'm gonna punt you down the stairs," Kyle warned, crossing his arms. He didn't like to think of himself as a bully but, man, his little brother *really* got on his nerves sometimes.

"Come on, Kyle," said Ike, "don't be a bitch."

"Mom!" Kyle shouted over the banister. "Ike is swearing!"

Ike shot Kyle a panicked glance as their mother's shrill voice came from the living room.

"Isaac Moisha Broflovski! Do you need me to take away your phone again, young man!? Come here this instant!"

Kyle smirked as Ike flipped him off and dejectedly descended the staircase, finally allowing Kyle to get to his bedroom.

He hurried inside and shut the door behind him, locking it for good measure, leaning back against it, pressing the back of his head up against the hard wood. He let out a long exhale. He didn't want to think it were entirely possible, but things had just gotten more complicated.

He hated the the first and only thing he could think to do was to call Cartman.

Cartman picked up on the first ring.

"Jew, what do you want? I'm a busy man and you just left like a half an hour ago. You miss me already or something?" he said. Kyle figured he must have been eating dinner because it sounded as if he were talking with his mouth full.

"My mom's making me go to the doctor next week," Kyle hissed into the receiver.

"Shit," said Cartman. *"You think you're gonna give yourself away?"*

"I don't see how I couldn't! They'll probably do tests and shit and coincidentally realize that I'm fucking undead," Kyle lamented.

"That sucks," said Cartman. *"You are starting to look undead, aren't you?"*

"Kinda," said Kyle.

"Come over here and I'll do your makeup before you go."

"Excuse me?"

"Yeah, concealer all up in this bitch," said Cartman. *"You'll look stunning. Like a corpse at a funeral."*

"Not exactly tempting," Kyle deadpanned. "And, besides, my temperature is like 95.5 or something. Technically I'm suffering from severe hypothermia or something."

Cartman chuckled and subsequently choked on his food. Kyle waited as he coughed for a few moments before speaking again.

"I always knew you were a frigid bitch," Cartman said, finally. He cleared his throat.

Kyle scoffed, leaning against the wall, looking out the window at the clear, moonless night. "You know what? Fuck you. I don't even know why I'm talking to you about this."

"Don't hang up, you Jew," Cartman said and Kyle could almost hear him rolling his eyes. *"You know what you've gotta do, right?"*

Kyle hesitated. "No. What?" He almost feared asking.

"You've gotta kill yourself," Cartman said.

"Kill myself!?" Kyle yelped. "That's a little drastic, don't you think?" He sat down at his desk and propped his head up with his elbow. "But why am I not surprised that you're suggesting this to me, dickhead."

"Relax, idiot," Cartman said, *"I don't mean really kill yourself."*

"Oh," said Kyle. "What are you talking about, then?"

"You've gotta fake your own death, obviously."

Kyle frowned. "I don't know, Cartman. Where would I go? What would I do? And, I don't want my parents to be hurt or anything."

"Trust me. It'll be better for them to have closure. You're gonna have to do it eventually, considering you're not going to age, right?" said Cartman. *"And, besides, you can stay with me."*

"With you?" Kyle snorted a laugh. "You just gonna hide me in your attic like Anne Frank?"

"I got it covered, don't worry," said Cartman

"That explains nothing," said Kyle.

Cartman was quiet for a second before he continued. *"Look,"* he said, *"I have some money. Like, a lot of money."*

"Oh, you do *not*," Kyle said. "You just asked me to spot you five bucks the other day."

Cartman laughed. *"Yeah, because I knew you'd do it. I don't need your Jew money. I like to take your Jew money but I don't need it."*

"What!?" Kyle exclaimed, his voice shooting up an octave. "No way. How much do you have?"

"Enough to pay for a shitty apartment or motel or something for at least a year," said Cartman.

Kyle was nearly speechless. "How? You don't even have a job!"

Kyle heard Cartman swallow and suck in a breath.

"My dad," Cartman said, kind of quiet, kind of slowly.

"Your *dad!*?" Kyle gasped. "Like your dead dad? Like Jack Tenorman your dad?"

"Yes, Jack Tenorman, my dead dad!" Cartman hissed. He didn't say anything else for a while and Kyle almost thought he hung up but, eventually, he spoke again.

"I have a trust fund that I got access to when I turned eighteen. I didn't know about it. My mom didn't know about it. I didn't know he knew about me. But, I guess he did, and the bastard left me some cash. So, yeah. I'm kind of loaded," Cartman explained, sounding almost shy.

Kyle had to pause to rub his forehead in disbelief. "Cartman," he said, "what are you saying, exactly?"

"I'm saying," Cartman said, *"we go to Denver."*

"Why would you do that for me?" Kyle asked in a hushed, incredulous voice.

"Because I'm doing it for myself, anyway," Cartman snapped, quickly. *"So, stop questioning everything I do and just trust me for once."*

Kyle tensed a muscle in his jaw and chewed on his thumbnail, exhaling through his nose. "Cartman, this is really serious."

"We shouldn't be talking about this on the phone," said Cartman. *"I'll come over."* He hung up and Kyle sat his phone down on his desk, hiding his face in his hands, trying to comprehend everything they had just talked about.

After a minute, he got up and opened his bedroom window, letting in the cool evening air. He leaned out, on his forearms, looking out at the flickering streetlights and the sky full of stars. He could see the light on in Stan's bedroom across the yard. He remembered all the nights they had spent as kids, talking through walkie-talkies or a tin can phone slung up between their two adjacent windows. It was always nice to have your best friend as your neighbor. It hurt now, thinking about it, and he wondered what Stan was up to in his room next door.

He was distracted, then, from his bittersweet nostalgia, by the sight of Cartman tromping down the sidewalk, cutting into Kyle's yard. He looked up at him in the window.

"Jewpuzzle, Jewpuzzle, let down your hair," he said in a Shakespearean accent.

"No," Kyle said, looking down at him, watchfully.

Cartman scoffed. "Well, you're a ginger anyhow so I don't even care," he said, crossing his arms. "But for real. You coming down here or do you want me to come up there?"

"Hm," said Kyle. He vaguely wondered if Stan could see this through his bedroom window but then quickly put that aside. "Back up, I'm coming down."

"Right, right," Cartman said, taking a wide step backwards.

Usually, Kyle would use the aspen tree that grew next to his window to get down but he felt like that wasn't necessary anymore. He hopped up in the windowsill and slung his legs over the edge, pushing himself out, dropping to the ground and landing on his feet, easily. Cartman raised his eyebrows, slightly impressed.

"Huh," he muttered.

"Come on, then," Kyle said, leading him around the back of the house.

They sat together along the back fence. Cartman stuffed his hands between his knees to keep them warm but Kyle hardly felt the chill at all.

"So, what are we doing?" Kyle asked, looking over at him in the dark. His night vision was impeccable these days.

"So, I figure, you fake your death and then come over and hide out at my house and then, once things calm down, we take off for Denver and we kill that guy from the internet," said Cartman, keeping his voice low.

Kyle swallowed. "Okay." He sighed and looked up at the stars. "How does one go about faking their own death?"

"Well, how do you want to die?"

Kyle thought for a long, long time. How *did* he want to die? He didn't want to die at all, but he tried to think of the least traumatic death he could have for his parent's sake. Thinking of his mom and dad grieving over him made him sick to his stomach. He wanted to be able to leave some comfort for them.

"Suicide," he said, finally.

"Really?" asked Cartman. "I thought that seemed a little too edgy for you."

"I want to be able to leave a note," said Kyle. "I want to be able to tell them that I love them and that it wasn't their fault. I want to-" he cut himself short when his throat tightened and hot, fat tears threatened to spill over his waterline. He bunched up his fists in the wet grass, digging his fingernails into the moist dirt. He fought hard against the sob in his chest. He really didn't want Cartman to see him cry.

Cartman stared ahead, stony faced. "Go on," he said.

Kyle sniffed loudly and let out a shuddering breath, pinching his eyes closed. "If there's a note, they won't look into it, even if they can't find a body. Right?"

Cartman nodded. "Yeah. We can stage a scene somewhere."

"Okay," Kyle said, quietly.

Suddenly, Cartman's hand was on his back, rubbing gently. Kyle stiffened immediately and his breath caught in his throat. Cartman didn't usually touch like this. Cartman wasn't tender or gentle. Cartman was heavy and rough. Cartman's pats felt more like punches and his sentiment cut like knives.

Kyle began to think that things were very different, and not just for him.

Cartman took in a hissing breath through his teeth and took his hand back, running it through his soft, brown hair, and Kyle watched him. Even in the dark, he could see his eyes. Cartman had the most intriguing eyes. One brown like the earth and one blue like the sky. They looked hesitant and pensive in the night. Kyle looked down.

"When do you want to do this?" Cartman asked.

"Soon," said Kyle. "Day after tomorrow."

Cartman nodded. "Okay," he said in a particularly gruff voice. He stood, put his hands in his jacket pockets, and looked down at Kyle, still staring down at the soil. "You okay?"

Kyle's gaze jerked up and he nodded. "I'm fine. I'll be fine," he said. "You should go. I should start getting things ready."

"Okay," Cartman said again but then rifled through his deep pocket, pulling out a blood bag. He tossed it down to Kyle and it was slightly warm from his body heat. "Figured you could use a late night snack," he said, grinning.

"Yeah, thanks," Kyle said, squeezing it gently.

"Yep," said Cartman, beginning a backwards trot away from him. "I'll see you later, Jew."

"Yeah, okay. Bye, Cartman," said Kyle. He watched as Cartman turned and strolled back through the yard and down the sidewalk. As he disappeared out of sight, Kyle finally rose to his feet. The ass of his pants was wet from the dew. He looked up at Stan's window again and the lights were out. Finally, he turned and climbed the aspen tree, letting himself back into his own bedroom through the open window.

He had a lot to do and not a lot of time to do it.

This Is How I Disappear

It was Kyle's last evening alive.

He stared out his bedroom window and watched as the sun sank low in the sky. By this time tomorrow, he would be dead to everyone in his life except for Cartman. His parents, his friends, his brother... They would never see him again. He felt like he should do something to really show them he loved them before he went away, but he didn't want to seem any more out of the ordinary than he already was. He didn't want to spend his last sunset alone, though. So, as he looked out across the street he lived on, he decided he would make one more attempt to talk to Stan.

He quietly slipped down the stairs and out the door, hurrying down the driveway and one house over to the Marsh's. On the doorstep, though, he hesitated. Would this really solve anything? He had to try. He knocked, firmly, on the door with his knuckles.

Stan answered. His expression immediately darkened. He crossed his arms. "What do you want?"

Kyle didn't know, right away, what to say. He stood there, gape mouthed for a moment. "I don't want to fight with you," he decided on.

"Why not? I thought you outgrew me," Stan said and his tone was biting. His words hit Kyle square in the chest like a knife.

"Please, Stan," Kyle pleaded, his voice wavered and he was terrified it would break completely. His bottom lip quivered and he bit down on it, hard.

Stan's expression softened slightly. "Kyle, I don't know what you want from me."

"I want you to forgive me," Kyle blurted out.

"You have to apologize to be forgiven!" Stan said.

Kyle frowned. Apologies came hard to him, especially when he felt like he hadn't done anything wrong. "I'm sorry that I hurt you," he said. He wanted to apologize in advance for what he was about to do. He held it back but the words turned to tears in his eyes.

Stan noticed. "Kyle," he said in a soft but almost scolding voice.

Kyle exhaled noisily and paced back and forth along the stoop, running his fingers through his hair. "Oh, god," he lamented.

Stan looked concerned. "Kyle, please tell me what's going on."

"I can't!" said Kyle. "I'm not allowed to tell you."

"If it's Cartman, I-" Stan started but Kyle cut him off.

"It's not fucking Cartman!" he shouted. "This isn't his fault!"

"What isn't his fault!?"

"Nothing you need to be concerned about!"

"You owe me an explanation," said Stan. "If anything, you owe me that, at the very least."

"I don't owe you anything!" Kyle exclaimed. He shook his head. "You know what? Forget it."

"Just go home," Stan said. "Obviously you don't want my help. And I..." He paused as if he were trying to decide if he wanted to continue. "And I, obviously, have better things to do."

Kyle tried to swallow the lump in his throat and blink the tears from his eyes but he was unsuccessful. "I'm sure you do," he said. He gave him one last pleading glance. "Goodbye, Stan."

Stan shut the door in his face and Kyle turned and ran back to his house in a sprint.

Upstairs, under his bed, he had a cooler filled with ice and ice packs where he kept the blood bags he had gotten from Cartman earlier in the day. He grabbed a pint of O Negative and slammed it back as quickly as he could. He found that, even though the blood bags tasted like hot garbage, O Negative blood tasted the best. It was his own blood type, as well as Cartman's, and it was one explanation why he couldn't get enough of the latter's.

He felt frustrated and angry as well as bitter and sad. He clattered down at his desk and opened a spiral bound notebook, clicking open a ball point pen.

Quickly, but in his neatest handwriting, he penned his suicide note.

It was a long and verbose letter but that was just how Kyle was. He wrote a small paragraph for everyone close to him, even including one for Cartman, as to not arouse suspicion. He cried while he wrote and angry, salty tears smudged the ink on the page. He wrote about how sorry he was and how he felt like he didn't have another choice. Those were both true. He wove a narrative into the letter as well, talking about endless despair and feelings of hopelessness that he never *truly* felt but could at least understand. He had to drive home that this was a suicide note so he had to make himself out to be someone likely to commit suicide.

He apologized. He apologized over and over and begged for forgiveness, especially from his parents.

And, since he was pretty sure Bebe Stevens was right about him, he added that he was gay. He still wasn't sure if he was gay or bi but it wouldn't matter anyhow. He felt like he wanted people to know. He had played the scenario of him coming out a million times in his head and it was something he wanted to do so he figured a suicide note addendum would suffice.

When he finished, he folded it neatly and hid it under his mattress. He would leave it out the following night, right before he disappeared out his window to rendezvous with Cartman.

It was getting late by then and his parents had gone to bed early so Kyle decided he would try to sleep. As a vampire, he didn't need to sleep, although he still could. He did so often because he liked to dream. In his dreams, things were normal sometimes.

He changed into his pajamas and brushed his teeth, staring at them in the mirror as he did. His canines jutted out from his gums like enamel stalactites, sharp as daggers. They made him look cool and edgy but he hated them.

He crawled into bed, his childhood bed, and stared up at those same glow-in-the-dark stars on his ceiling. It really hit him then that this was it. This was his very last night in the room he had slept in since he was born. It was the end of something that he never knew would end. It was his last night sleeping in a house with his family. It was his last night *alive* and that feeling tore through his chest like a wrecking ball.

On his last night in his childhood bed, Kyle Broflovski cried himself to sleep.

When he woke up the next day, he stayed in bed for a long while, just staring and thinking. He wanted to do something. Something for people to remember him by, considering it was his last day on Earth, but he couldn't bring himself to face anyone. Eventually, he got out of bed and began to pack for his long journey.

He only planned on taking one bag and so he filled it with things he would need. He took out his life savings from the shoe box under his bed. He had a few hundred dollars or so saved up from birthdays and Hanukkahs and he rolled the stack of bills neatly up and secured them with a rubber band, placing it in his worn out camping backpack.

The last time he had used this specific backpack was in his Sophomore year of high school when he had gone hiking on Mount Silverheels with his Earth Sciences class. Stan and Cartman had been in the class, as well as Wendy, Craig Tucker, and Clyde Donovan. It was meant to be nothing more than a quick day trip but the six of them had gotten separated from the rest of the class thanks to Stan's poor sense of direction and ended up lost overnight. It was absolute chaos, Kyle remembered. Cartman and Craig had gotten into a fist fight over the map, Clyde got frostbite, and Stan had ended up with poison ivy on his dick for some reason he refused to explain. Kyle had never gone hiking since and the army green canvas bag was still marked with mud from when he had tossed it on the ground in frustration. He gently rubbed the set in stains with his fingers. What he wouldn't give to be lost out there again, with his friends, instead of what he was currently facing.

He continued to pack, tossing in a few extra changes of clothes, some paperback novels he hadn't yet gotten the chance to read, his personal hygiene products like deodorant and his toothbrush, and pictures of his mom and dad and Ike and one of himself with Stan and Kenny and Cartman, all goofy and laughing and smiling. Lastly, he packed his favorite green ushanka. He had worn it everyday through childhood and, even then, through most of high school. He still wore it sometimes. It was a part of him that he didn't want to leave behind.

His heart hurt as he zipped up the backpack for a final time, dropping it down next to the window he would later escape through. He sank down on the floor next to it.

His eyes were perpetually on the clock, counting down the seconds he had left in this life. It was beginning to grow dark outside so, after a grand attempt to rally the will, he forced himself to rise to his feet and go downstairs.

His parents were in the living room. His father, Gerald, was watching the news from his armchair while his mother read a book in hers. Kyle quietly slipped into the room and sat down on the couch.

"There's my bubbeleh," said Sheila, glancing up from her romance novella.

Kyle forced a smile. "Hi, Ma," he said.

"What have you been up to lately, Kyle?" asked Gerald. "Getting ready for college, I hope."

"Yeah, yeah," Kyle said, trying to sound optimistic despite the churning anxiety in the pit of his stomach. "That and just hanging out with my friends since I'm... not going to see them much after this summer, I guess."

"I haven't seen much of Stanley around," Sheila observed.

Kyle swallowed. "He's been... uh... busy," he lied. "Mostly just been hanging out with Cartman." He didn't know why he felt the need to specify that it was Cartman he was hanging out with. Why did it matter?

"You know, I worried about him being a bad influence on you since he was such a troubled child but he's really grown into a nice young man, hasn't he?" said Sheila.

Kyle thought that maybe she was hinting at something and, yet, he couldn't fathom what. Still, he hated how Cartman was able to charm his way through life ever since he got tall and, dare he think it, good looking. He clenched his jaw slightly. "Uh, yeah, I guess."

"And, by the way, Kyle, I made your doctor's appointment today. It's for next Tuesday, so don't forget about it. It's on the calendar," Sheila said.

"Okay, thanks," Kyle said, trying hard to steady his voice. His parents were both so oblivious. They were about to have their entire world turned upside-down and they didn't even know it. He felt awful. He had never really been close to or gotten along with his parents but they didn't deserve to lose a son. He was glad they would at least still have Ike, though, even after he was gone.

He stared, blankly, at the TV, not hearing a word the blonde-haired news anchor was saying. Instead, he thought and hoped his presence would be enough of a good last memory for his parents to hold on to.

Soon, though, Sheila closed her book and Gerald turned off the television and the both of them rose to start getting ready for bed and the lump in Kyle's throat returned because he knew that this was really goodbye. He stood too.

"Goodnight, son," said Gerald giving Kyle a pat on the back.

Kyle couldn't help himself from reaching out and giving his dad a hug. "Goodnight, Dad," he said.

"Everything alright, Kyle?" Gerald asked, returning the hug with his eldest son.

"Yeah," Kyle said, letting go and stepping back. He turned to Sheila and gave her a tight hug as well. "Goodnight, Mom," he said. "I love you."

"Goodnight, Kyle," Sheila said, kissing him on the cheek. "I love you too, Bubbie." She exchanged a concerned glance with her husband as Kyle let go of the embrace.

Kyle cleared his throat. "I just feel like I haven't said it in a while," he explained, weakly.

"Well, we love you very much, Kyle," said Gerald.

Kyle nodded. "Goodnight," he said again, turning as they went up the stairs. He hurried to the kitchen and, from the sheer stress of it all, immediately vomited blood into the sink. He coughed and spit and hoped no one had heard. He washed it down the drain and rinsed his mouth out with water from the tap. The thick, stale donor blood was even worse tasting the second time around.

Then, he listened. With his enhanced vampire ears he was able to hear his parents upstairs. He heard the sound of their footsteps and the running water of their bathroom sink. After a few minutes, he heard the creak of two bodies getting into bed and he was even able to make out the sound of a light switch flicking off. Still, he waited, firmly gripping the edge of the sink with his hands, until he heard quiet snoring from the room above. He let out a long breath that he didn't even know he had been holding.

Quickly and quietly, he ascended the stairs. As he passed Ike's bedroom, though, the door was ajar and he peeked his head in. Ike was busy at his computer, his back to the door, the room only lit with the blue light of a computer screen. He was playing Minecraft, building what seemed to be a full scale replica of the Canadian Library of Parliament. Kyle was vaguely impressed. He turned and closed the door, not wanting to disturb his brother from his hard work.

Finally, he made it back to his bedroom. He laid back on the bed, memorizing the feeling of the springy mattress and the downy pillows that he had grown up with. He gave one last look up at the glow-in-the-dark stars on the ceiling.

He got up, lifting the mattress up slightly, procuring the suicide note he had written the night before. He carefully unfolded it and laid it neatly out onto his desk. He cried again but only for a minute.

Then, he grabbed his backpack off the floor, slinging it over his shoulders, and opened the window. For May, the night was cool, and the chilly breeze blew his curtains out in billowing poofs. He let out a long, lingering sigh and climbed up into the window frame, slinging his feet over the edge. And, with the last bit of courage he could muster, he dropped down and took off into the night.

Where Do We Go?

Kyle showed up at Cartman's back door as an anxious mess, trembling and chest heaving rapidly, cheeks streaked with tears. Cartman looked down at him as he answered the door.

"Everything all set, then?" he asked.

Kyle nodded. "Yeah," he said quietly. "I left a note and-" he paused to sniffle a little "-I guess I'm dead now."

Cartman nodded solemnly but then perked up a little. "Come on, let me show you your super secret hideout." He ushered Kyle inside, closing the sliding glass door behind him.

Kyle followed him, apprehensively, through the house, watching curiously as Cartman tugged down the ladder to the attic.

"So you *are* hiding me in the attic like Anne Frank," Kyle observed, dryly.

Cartman snickered. "Yeah, sure. It's symbolic or something."

"What if your mom finds me up here?"

"My mom hasn't been up here since the nineties so you won't have to worry about getting found out," Cartman said, climbing up the rickety rungs.

"Is your mom here now?" Kyle asked, testing the ladder with his feet, carefully.

"No, she's," Cartman stiffened a little ahead of him, "with clients tonight."

"Oh," said Kyle.

In the attic, it was warm and musty and dust danced through the air, catching in the moonlight and the yellow streetlights outside. There was a small, octagonal window that faced out towards the street and, beneath it, Cartman had laid out a nest of blankets and pillows. Kyle stepped towards it, tentatively, looking around at the high rafters and wooden floor creaking beneath his feet. He sat down in the pile of quilts, crossing his legs, blinking up at Cartman.

"Thanks," he said.

Cartman flushed a little and turned away. "Ah, it's nothin'." He shoved his hands in his pockets and toed at the floor. "Um, do you need anything?" He looked uncomfortable asking.

"No, I'm okay," Kyle said, he sat up on his knees and looked out the window. "I hope nobody sees me up here."

"Oh, wait," Cartman said. He rummaged through an old cardboard box, pulling out a plain, white sheet. He stepped around Kyle and hung it up over the window on two large nails.

"How's that?"

"Better," said Kyle. The sheet would help keep his eyes safe from the sun in the daytime, too. He tucked his knees up to his chest. "So, what do we do now?"

"Shit, I've gotta stage your death, huh?" said Cartman, rubbing his chin, thoughtfully. "Um, gimme your phone and keys and wallet and stuff." He held out his hand and Kyle emptied his pockets.

"You gonna go throw them off the bridge?" Kyle asked, already guessing Cartman's plan.

Cartman nodded. "Yeah, seems likely, right? They can't search the *whole* river for your body but if they find your shit in there, they'll make a reasonable assumption, yeah?"

"Sure," said Kyle. "Just don't get caught or you'll be the prime suspect in a murder investigation."

Cartman snorted. "I'll probably be the prime suspect in a murder investigation anyhow," he said. "Last person to hang out with you. Leaving town directly after your disappearance. Criminal record. Known asshole," he listed things off, counting them on his fingers. "Looks pretty sus." Then, he shrugged. "Eh, but it's fine. I'll be back later. You wanna hang out when I get back?"

Kyle swallowed and glanced out the window, through the sheer makeshift curtain. "No. No, I think I'm gonna sleep."

"Whatever, loser," said Cartman. He started down the ladder. "I'll talk to you tomorrow, then."

"Yeah," Kyle said, almost quietly. "Let me know what's happening out there."

Cartman gave him a nod. "Will do."

The hatch closed and Kyle listened as Cartman's footsteps retreated and the back door opened and closed. He let out a long breath, falling back into the pillows, and stared up at the beams on the ceiling. There was so much in his head that he couldn't focus on a single thing. Mostly, though, he thought about Cartman.

He hated to do so, but he was still convinced that there was something else going on. After all this time, he still couldn't wrap his head around *why* Cartman was being so supportive towards him. It was strange, to say the least. And, the care that Cartman had put into making his attic a hospitable place for Kyle to lay low was impressive, although it was basically just pillows tossed onto the floor. He felt warm and safe and, despite the sorrow in his heart from the choice he made tonight, he was able to sleep.

BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM!

Kyle's eyes snapped open and jolted awake. The sun was bright in the morning sky and he squinted as it touched his face.

BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM!

The incessant pounding continued beneath him. He heard footsteps on the stairs and assumed that the hammering had awoken Cartman as well. He sat up on his knees and peeked out the window, under the sheet. On the doorstep, below, Kyle could see someone with jet black hair pounding on the door with his fist. He knew immediately that this was Stan. He felt sick.

He watched carefully from above as Cartman answered the door in his underwear. Thankfully, because of his sensitive ears, he could hear them speak as clearly as day.

"Marsh, what the fuck do you want?" Cartman asked groggily, sounding sleepy and annoyed.

"What the *fuck* did you do to him?" Stan growled.

Kyle gulped and sunk down a little lower in the window.

Cartman let out an exasperated sigh. "You're gonna hafta elaborate because I have no fucking clue what you're talking about," he said, leaning in the doorway.

"Kyle," Stan said. "What did you do?"

Cartman groaned. "Stan, get your fuckin' house in order. I don't know what the fuck is going on with you and Kyle but leave me out of it, dude," he crossed his arms and, even from his angle, Kyle thought he looked imposing. Cartman was also a phenomenal liar and it was almost a treat to be on his side of things for once.

Stan glared at Cartman, his shoulders rising and falling with his breath. "He killed himself, Cartman," Stan said through gritted teeth.

"Shut the fuck up, Stan, no he fucking didn't," Cartman said.

Kyle was intrigued. As much as seeing Stan upset hurt his heart, watching Cartman lie was like watching a narrative and he was left on the edge of his seat, waiting for what he would come up with next.

"He left a suicide note and disappeared," Stan said in low, quavering voice. "His mom called my mom this morning, screaming and crying and the cops aren't even going to look for him because they say it's a cut and dry suicide." Stan was rambling on now and Cartman just stood and stared at him with a blank, disbelieving expression.

"He wouldn't do this," Stan said, finally reaching his point. "Kyle wouldn't kill himself so I *know* you know what happened. I *know* you did something."

Stan was right, Kyle thought. He wouldn't kill himself. It was never something that crossed his mind. Stan knew that much about him and he knew it made him suspicious.

Cartman took in a sharp breath and stepped back a bit, into the doorway. Kyle couldn't see his face anymore but he could imagine.

"You're gonna come to my fucking house and blame this on me?" Cartman said, his voice rough and rumbling in a way that made goosebumps spring up on Kyle's arms and sucked the breath from his lungs. Cartman paused, breathing out, heavily. If Kyle didn't know better, he would have assumed that Cartman was *actually* upset about Stan accusing him of foul play. But, maybe he was. Kyle almost wished he could go downstairs and set Stan straight but he knew he couldn't. Plus, he knew Stan was just speaking out of hurt and it made him feel immensely guilty.

"I wouldn't fucking touch him," Cartman continued in his deep, threatening voice. He stepped forward again and pressed a finger to Stan's chest, accusingly. Stan slapped it away, quickly.

"Yes you would," Stan snarled. "I told him he was gonna get hurt. I told him not to trust you. If anyone was going to hurt him, it would have been you."

"Yeah, sure, Stan, this is all *my* fault," Cartman said, voice dripping with sarcasm. "*I'm* the one who's been giving him hell for no fucking reason for the past month."

Stan's face reddened. "Listen, you don't know what you're talking about."

"I know exactly what I'm talking about!" countered Cartman. "I'm the one who was talking to him about it!" He shook his head and ran his fingers through his hair. "Fuck!"

"I know it was you," Stan said again. "It had to have been you."

"Get the fuck away from me," Cartman said curtly.

"Or fucking what?"

"I'll call the fucking cops or I'll kick your ass right here in my goddamn front yard," Cartman warned.

Stan glowered at him, bottom lip trembling dangerously. "I'm gonna get to the bottom of this," he said. "And if I find out it was you..." he trailed off and composed himself for a second before continuing. "I'll make it even."

Cartman chuckled but there was no humor in it, only malice. "I'd like to see you try."

The venom in his words sent chills up Kyle's spine and he sunk back down into his pillow nest as Cartman shut the door in Stan's face. Still listening, however, Kyle heard Cartman stomp through the house. He wasn't sure what he was doing but he was certainly being loud about it. After a few minutes, the attic hatch was yanked open and Cartman climbed up into view.

"The fucking nerve!" he exclaimed, immediately. "Did you hear him down there!?"

Kyle nodded. "He's just upset," he said. "Don't take it to heart."

"Like hell I won't!" Cartman growled. He plopped down in the blankets next to Kyle, leaning up against the wall and crossing his arms. "Fucking Marsh. What a bastard."

"He's blaming himself," Kyle tried to explain.

"No, he's blaming *me!*" Cartman said. "To think that... Do you... If I..." He struggled to put his thoughts into words and, instead, pretended he was strangling the air in front of him. He sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. "Look, I wouldn't fucking hurt you, alright? Do you know that? Because it's important to me that you know that."

Kyle blinked. "Uh, yeah," he said. "Not that you could now, even if you wanted to. But I'm sure you've thought about it in the past."

Cartman waved his hand, dismissively. "Yeah, sure I've had intrusive thoughts about it for years but it's not like I'd actually do it." He huffed but then cracked a grin. "You sure I couldn't, though?"

"Oh, please," said Kyle. "I have otherworldly supernatural powers and what do you have? A shitty pocket knife."

Cartman laughed. "Listen, asshole, I know where you sleep. Catch me outside whittling a wooden stake with my shitty pocket knife and then we'll see how tough you are."

Kyle laughed too, almost falling into him but, as soon as their shoulders brushed up against each other, he straightened himself back up. He cleared his throat.

"For real, though. I have garlic and I'm not afraid to use it," said Cartman in a faux threatening tone. It reminded Kyle of his deep, gruff voice from earlier and the hairs on the back of his neck bristled.

Cartman thought for a moment. "Does garlic actually do anything against vampires or is that just total bullshit?"

"I think I'm just allergic to it or something now," said Kyle. "It doesn't kill me but my body doesn't *like* it either."

"Weak," said Cartman. "No pizza for you, I guess."

"Oh, you can pry pizza from my cold, dead hands," said Kyle.

"They're already pretty cold and dead so, I mean, they're just your regular hands at this point," said Cartman. "But, so you're saying if I went downstairs right now and ordered a pizza with extra garlic, you would eat it?"

"No, because it's like eight in the morning," Kyle said. "I am hungry, though."

"Food hungry or blood hungry?"

Kyle looked at him apologetically in lieu of an answer.

Cartman shook his head. "Oh no," he groaned. He stood. "Blood bags. You get blood bags."

Kyle flopped dramatically onto his side. "But they suck so bad!"

"Well, you're gonna have to deal with it because we've got like six of them left and I don't know what to do with them if you don't drink them!"

"Take them back to the hospital," Kyle suggested, narrowing his eyes.

"Oh, so the gay ass injured people can have them? Pass."

"You're going to be an injured person here in a minute," Kyle taunted.

"Watch out, we've got fucking Dracula over here," Cartman said, rolling his eyes.

Kyle snorted. "Hilarious," he deadpanned. He shifted where he sat and Cartman could tell something was on his mind.

"What?"

"Nothing," Kyle said, looking up. "It's just... Cartman, Stan's not gonna stop. If he thinks it's his fault, he's gonna try to prove that it's not. He *wants* it to be you."

"I'm not afraid of Marsh," Cartman said. He licked his lips, tensely. "Look, I'm gonna go get you some blood and then I've gotta go pretend to be sad or something gay like that."

"Well, good luck with that," Kyle said. He unzipped his backpack and pulled out a paperback novel. "I'll be here. Not like I have anywhere else to go."

Cartman nodded and began his climb down from the attic.

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Two days passed and Kyle was still up in the attic, beginning to get very bored. Several times a day, Cartman would come up to keep him company or bring him blood or books to read, but still, he spent the majority of his time thinking.

The day before, forensic divers had recovered his phone from the bottom of the riverbed and the police were ready to close the case and didn't suspect foul play, so Kyle found some relief in that.

Currently, he was alone in the attic. His synagogue had decided to have a wake in his honor for the benefit of his parents and Kyle had told Cartman that he'd better go or else. Kyle wanted information and he wanted Cartman to stop looking like a murder suspect so they could go to Denver as quickly as possible. Sitting around in South Park was making him feel even more guilty and he was starting to get really hungry.

Sitting there, alone, in the attic, as the sun began to set outside, Kyle made an executive decision. They were going to leave that night, no matter what. So, when Cartman got back an hour later, with a tired look on his face and pursed lips, Kyle was ready, sitting on his packed bag, legs and arms crossed.

"We're leaving tonight," Kyle said, watching Cartman close the hatch behind him in the dark. He was in a black suit and Kyle hadn't seen him wear it before but he was nearly positive that

Cartman wouldn't go out and buy a brand new suit for his fake funeral.

Cartman planted his hands on his hips. "Jew," he said, firmly but sounding worn out.

"Tonight," Kyle insisted, standing and stepping towards him, his skin a translucent blue in the moonlight that filtered in through the makeshift curtain. "I'm killing that guy tomorrow. Are you-"

"Kyle."

"Are you with me or not?"

Kyle glared up at Cartman, eyes green and shining, but Cartman still had a particular kind of look on his face that said he really wasn't in the mood to argue. Kyle continued to scowl, though. He was never one to let Cartman off easy.

"You really want to go tonight?" Cartman asked.

"Yes," said Kyle. "I need to get out of this town."

Cartman let out a long, exasperated sigh. "Fine. I've gotta change and pack some stuff and then I'll start loading the car." He turned away but Kyle caught him by the sleeve and tugged him back.

"What's wrong?" he asked, finally.

Cartman scoffed. "Jew, I just went to your fucking funeral. It was depressing as balls. I had to, like, fake cry and hug your mom."

"Oh, god," Kyle groaned, feeling like his heart was ripped in half. He turned and ran his hands through his hair. "I'm such a fucking asshole. I ruined my parents' lives."

"Relax," Cartman said, the annoyance in his voice melting away a little. "You did what you had to do." He paused and his eyebrow twitched. "I got to read the note you left, too."

If Kyle could have blushed, he would have. "Oh yeah?"

"Yeah, obviously, considering you wrote part of it directly to me," Cartman said, hiding a smirk.

"Don't read too much into it," said Kyle, rolling his eyes. "It would have been suspicious if I said goodbye to everyone but you."

"Really? I would have thought it would be more in character for you to purposefully leave me out," Cartman mused. "Considering you hate me or whatever."

"Do you think I'd be in your attic right now if I hated you, dumbass?" Kyle snapped. "We're friends, I guess. Shut the fuck up about it."

Cartman hummed and started for the ladder again. He had almost entirely disappeared but then popped his head back up, suddenly. "Oh, yeah," he said. He propped his head up on his elbows, blinking innocently up at Kyle. "You divulged some *very* interesting information in your suicide note, Kyle. Anything you wanna talk about, Kyle?" His lips curled up into an impish grin.

Kyle's stomach dropped. He had almost forgotten that he had come out in the suicide note and he *never* expected Cartman to read it. "Fuck you!" he exclaimed, trying to kick him down the ladder. "That wasn't information for you to know! Mind your own damn business!"

"Ay! I'm trying to be a supportive friend you demon Jew!" Cartman hollered.

"You are not!"

"I am too!"

"Go pack your shit!"

"But Kyle-"

"Shut up!"

Kyle slammed the hatch closed and listened to Cartman's boisterous laughter beneath him. He heard him singing softly to himself as he packed his bags for the trip, drawers opening and closing. Cartman had a singing voice so beautiful that it was almost unfair. Even hushed under his breath a floor below, Kyle could still hear the soft, sleepy tune dancing from his chest and lips and filling the space around him. It did things to his insides that he would rather not admit. He swallowed thickly and continued to listen.

Eventually, Kyle heard him open the front door and he shuffled over to the octagonal window to peek out from behind the sheet curtain and watch as he tossed a suitcase and a duffle bag into the bed of his truck that was parked on the curb in front of the house. He was wearing different clothes now, a red windbreaker and jeans. He went back inside and brought out another backpack.

Suddenly a voice called out from a few yards away and Kyle recognized it instantly to be Stan, again.

Cartman groaned and he forcefully slammed the tailgate on his truck. "What the fuck is it *this time*, Stan?" he asked, sounding more inconvenienced than anything.

Kyle watched as Stan tread through his front yard next door, arms crossed over his chest. He wasn't wearing a suit and Kyle wasn't actually sure if he had gone to the wake or not. It wouldn't have been like him to miss it, although, Stan wasn't acting like his best self those days.

Stan had always lived next door, between Kyle's and Cartman's houses, always separating them, keeping the peace. It was oddly ironic that, now, Stan was trying to force himself in

between again. The order had been disrupted and Natural Leader Stan Marsh had nothing else to do.

"I see you're leaving town," Stan observed, coldly. "Covering your tracks, huh?"

Kyle could see Cartman's muscles tense with what he assumed to be anger.

"Marsh," said Cartman, trying his hardest to keep his voice level. "I don't know if you've noticed, but I don't really have a reason to stick around anymore."

Kyle was confused and a bit taken back. What had Cartman been staying in South Park for in the first place? Was it a lie? Was there some truth in it? Kyle just didn't know.

Stan scoffed. "That's bullshit," he sneered.

"It's not and you know it's not," growled Cartman.

Stan clenched and unclenched his jaw. "I don't know what to believe," he said, almost sounding like the Stan Marsh that Kyle knew. "But I'm going to find out what happened."

"Yeah, yeah, you said that already," Cartman said, dryly.

"I mean it," said Stan. "Watch your back."

Cartman let out a loud bark of sardonic laughter. "Watch my back? *Watch my back!*? Darsh, have you gone completely *insane*? Have you lost your *mind*?" he exclaimed. "Watch *my* back!? You watch *your* back!"

Kyle sighed to himself and shook his head. The hunger pangs were beginning to set in and he was afraid that this was going to take a while. He watched, half-lidded as they argued back and forth for a while. He began to empathize with Bebe Stevens, who had boys fighting over her for all of junior and senior year. For different reasons, ultimately, but it was still frustrating.

He prayed, under his breath, that the spat wouldn't come to blows. He didn't want to have to blow his cover to run out and break it up before they really hurt each other.

Eventually, Stan did what he came to do and swore revenge and Cartman retaliated with a creative string of insults and then stormed back into the house, slamming the door behind him. Once again, Kyle flinched as he listened to Cartman tearing about the house, clattering and stomping around. He wondered if this is how he acted when he would run on home after an argument when they were kids.

Kyle double checked that he wasn't leaving anything behind and slung his backpack over his shoulder, sitting against the wall, waiting for Cartman to calm down so they could get on their way. After a while, he heard Stan's car start up and drive away. Several more minutes passed before Cartman finally popped up into the attic.

"Ready when you are, Jew," he said, not showing any trace of the rage Kyle had just seen on him outside.

Kyle nodded, rising to his feet. "Let's go."

Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)

By the time Kyle and Cartman had stopped at Walmart to get a burner phone for Kyle and at a gas station so Cartman could fill up his truck with gas and get a cup of coffee, it was past midnight when they pulled into the parking lot of a crummy motel on the outskirts of Denver. They didn't get out right away, instead, sitting together, quietly, listening to the hum of the fluorescent lights along the walkway.

Cartman clicked his tongue and took the last drag on a cigarette, flicking the butt out the slightly opened window. "Welp," he said, slapping the steering wheel with both hands, exhaling a puff of smoke, "wait your little Jew ass here. I'm gonna go check in."

Kyle nodded, leaning back in the seat and crossing his arms. "Right. Not going anywhere," he said.

Cartman got out and Kyle watched him walk to the front office. Kyle wondered how he could still look so cocky and full of himself despite the circumstances.

Within a few minutes he came back out, twirling a set of keys on his finger, whistling a tune to himself. He banged his fist on the hood of his truck and motioned for Kyle to get out and follow him. He did, coming up behind Cartman as he unlocked the door.

"Ta-dah," Cartman said, a little lukewarm but with lackluster jazz hands, as he kicked the door open, flicking on the lights. "Home sweet home for the next week."

It was pretty much what Kyle anticipated when Cartman said "a shitty motel room" but it wasn't too bad. It had a dresser and a TV and a desk and a microwave. The walls were white and bare and the paint was only chipping a little, peeling off in small patches here and there. The carpet was slightly dirty and worn in from decades of foot traffic and the ceiling was discolored with brown water stains. Kyle frowned, though, when he noticed something.

"There's only one bed," he observed. It was a queen-sized bed, at least, but there was still only one. The blankets were a sickly dark green color and looked stiff.

Cartman scoffed. "So?" He went back outside and returned with his arms full of luggage and tossed it in the corner, shutting the door behind him with this foot.

"I mean... There's only one bed!" Kyle said, holding his hands out as if presenting it to him.

"Yeah, and?" said Cartman. "All the double rooms were booked. You act like you've never shared a bed with me before. We used to do it all the time when we were kids. I'm not gonna fuckin' piss the bed or anything. Jesus."

Kyle huffed and hopped up to sit on the corner of the desk, setting his backpack down on the floor next to him. "Hmph," he said. "Whatever. I don't need to sleep anyways."

Cartman rolled his eyes. "Pussy ass bitch," he said, pulling his shirt off over his head, tossing it on the floor, and belly flopping onto the bed. "I'm fucking exhausted so *I'm* going to sleep. I don't know what the fuck *you're* going to do but have fun, I guess."

Kyle moved down into the swiveling desk chair, unzipping his backpack and taking out a paperback book. "Don't worry, I think I'll live. Plus, I still have to set up this new phone." He took it out of his pocket. It was a cheap smartphone from Walmart but it would do. It was unregistered and untraceable and that was all that mattered. He and Cartman had figured that it would be helpful to have a way to communicate if they ever got separated on a killing spree.

"Suit yourself," Cartman said. He crawled up to the pillows and halfheartedly threw a blanket over his legs.

Kyle hummed at him, not looking up from his phone where he was adding contacts off the top of his head.

"Are you gonna be ready for tomorrow?" Cartman asked. "Killing a guy for real."

"Of course," said Kyle. He glanced up and smirked. "He gave us his address. He's expecting us."

"Then again, he *does* think that we are a preteen girl," added Cartman.

"Yeah, and that's exactly why I'm ready." Kyle put the phone down on the table and swiveled the chair to face Cartman. "I can do this," he said, earnestly.

"I know you can. But... you know what would make this whole thing a lot easier?" said Cartman.

Kyle didn't respond but wordlessly prompted him to continue with his skeptical gaze.

"If you turned me into a vampire too."

"No," Kyle said, quickly and firmly. "No way. Absolutely not."

"But Kyyyyyle," Cartman whined, rolling over in bed. "It's not faaaaaair. Why nooooooot?"

"Do you really want me to list the reasons because there's a *lot* of reasons," said Kyle.

"Do go on," said Cartman in a drawling voice.

"Okay, uh, for starters, being a vampire *sucks* most of the time. I mean, the payout, at least so far, has not been worth the hassle. Secondly, we'd have to kill *twice* as many people and that means twice as many chances to get caught. It's just not sustainable," said Kyle, naming the reasons off, counting them on his fingers. "And *third* and most important of all, giving *you*, of all people, vampire powers seems *highly* irresponsible to me."

"What's *that* supposed to mean!?" Cartman yelled.

"You know exactly what it means," Kyle said. "You are impulsive, irrational, immature, immoral, incompetent... What are some other 'i' words?"

"Important. Incredible. Intelligent. Ineffable," Cartman continued.

"More like inappropriate. Idiotic. Inconvenient. Incurable," said Kyle.

"Now you're just making words up."

"Insufferable, that's a good one. And impotent," said Kyle.

Cartman flushed. "Hey! Fuck you! You don't know shit about my dick!" he exclaimed.

"Thank god," Kyle said, flipping through the pages of his novel.

"You know, you're being awfully rude to me considering I'm helping you out and doing you a solid here," said Cartman, folding his arms behind his head, on the frumpy motel pillows.

"Just because you're doing me a favor doesn't mean I'm going to stop ripping on you," Kyle said, eyes in his book. "Sorry, if that was your grand idea or whatever."

"Nah," said Cartman. "I didn't expect you to. I mean, you could straight up save my life and I'd still call you a bitchy Jew."

Kyle looked up, half-lidded, lips pursed. "I don't think you'll have to worry about that."

Cartman laughed. "Oh, come on, Jew. You'd save me if I needed saved. You always do."

"Bad habits are hard to break," said Kyle.

"Come oooooon," said Cartman. "I gave you my blood, housed you in my attic, and drove you to Denver, *among other things*, and you're not even gonna save me one more time? Weak, dude."

"I never asked you for any of this," Kyle said, looking back down, pretending to ignore him.

Cartman hmped and scratched lazily at his bare chest. "Well, you didn't need to because I-" he paused to dramatically smooth down his eyebrow, "-got this."

Kyle snorted and glanced up at him for a second, hiding a smirk. "Go to sleep, idiot," he said trying to sound domineering but it came out bordering on fondness.

"Yeah, yeah," Cartman said. "G'night, Jew." He flicked off the light next to the bed and smothered his head with an extra pillow, rolling over onto his side.

"Night, Cartman," said Kyle.

Then, he was left with only the light from the lamp on the desk he sat at, which was fine. Vampirism had made his night vision excellent. He leaned back in the wooden desk chair, swiveling idly back and forth, book open in his hands. He stared at the page for a good long

while, reading but not really taking in any of the words or comprehending their pith. Instead, ended up lost in thought. After a while, he heard Cartman's breathing even out and he began to snore softly. Kyle found himself looking up, staring at him as he slept.

Part of Cartman's face was covered with the pillow and he laid on his side, but Kyle could see his lips slightly parted, one round, dimpled cheek, and the line of his jaw, flecked with dark brown stubble. He never looked quite so *Cartman* when he slept. Kyle wasn't sure what that meant but it held meaning. To him, at the very least.

There was so much that he wondered about Cartman and would continue to wonder about Cartman. There were so many questions that either didn't have a straight answer or that Kyle could never bring himself to ask. For someone that he had grown up with, there was an awful lot that he didn't know about Eric Cartman.

Once again, he tried to guess his motivation. As many times as Cartman would brush it off when he asked, Kyle still had to wonder why in the world Cartman had chosen to be his partner in crime. There wasn't an answer but Kyle was beginning to concoct a few theories out of the puzzle pieces of his strange, symbiotic relationship with Cartman. They weren't particularly creative theories but Kyle was working with what he had available to him at the moment.

It might have all come down to adventure, Kyle thought. Cartman was always drawn to and sought out adventure. Whether it was Somalian pirates or pretend superheroes, Cartman was always the first to throw himself, wholeheartedly, into another world. Kyle had to believe that he, himself, was the gateway to adventure this time. He had inadvertently thrust Cartman into the world of the supernatural and he was living for it. And besides. Having a vampire on your side was a very classic Cartman thing to seek out, even if they had been sworn rivals in what felt like a whole other life.

Plus, Cartman had never been one to shy away from a chance to kill. Kyle knew that. Everyone knew that. And, as much as Cartman had grown and matured as he got older, there was still an angry, abused child inside him, ready to unleash hell upon those who had wronged him. In this case, however, the revenge was metaphorical and Kyle thought that maybe Cartman was thinking of people other than himself.

Kyle sat there, in the low light, watching Cartman as he slept peacefully and was stunned when he felt something that felt an awful lot like affection stirring inside of him. Instantly, he felt sick and tore his gaze away, leaping up like a startled cat. He rushed off to the bathroom and shut the door behind him.

The bathroom was small and smelled faintly of mildew but mostly of soap and bleach. The shower looked newer and fancier than anything else Kyle had seen in the entire establishment so far. He gripped the edge of the sink and stared at himself in the oval-shaped mirror. His skin was pale and his eyes and cheekbones were sunken. His eyes were gleaming but he looked gaunt and tired. With his lips parted, he could see the tips of canine teeth, longer and sharper than anyone's. He exhaled deeply, trying to ignore the pounding in his chest.

"Don't do this," he told his reflection in a hushed, scolding voice. "Don't do it. Don't catch feelings for him." He let out a short sigh, biting down hard on his bottom lip. He screwed his

eyes shut.

"Oh, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck," he muttered. He turned and paced around the tiny bathroom, running his hand through his wild, auburn curls. He spun around again and pointed an accusatory finger at his reflection. "Knock it off. I mean it."

He dragged his hands down his face. "Oh, god, I'm talking to my reflection. I'm a vampire. I shouldn't even have a reflection." He swallowed. "This is the worst possible thing that could have ever happened to me," he murmured, ignoring the fact that he was a vampire, had just faked his own death, would never see his friends or family again, was about to kill a man, and his best friend hated his guts.

He sat down on the closed toilet seat and put his head between his knees. *Cartman? Eric Cartman?* The thought was nauseating to him. Though, he still couldn't shake the feeling. It clung to his insides like a set-in stain. Under normal circumstances, he would have tried to sleep it off but, currently, the only place to sleep was in bed, directly next to Cartman and he was not about to make that mistake. So, instead, he undressed and got in the shower.

Temperature was hard to distinguish now that his body temperature was far below average, but the water was hot and clarifying. He breathed out a heavy sigh into the steam, leaning on his hands against the white tile wall. The water ran down his back and through his hair, dripping into his eyes.

He picked up the small, complimentary shampoo that sat on the shower shelf, squirting a generous dollop into his palm and lathered it into his thick, curly hair. Washing his hair was something that tended to make him feel calm and relaxed. It sort of helped but he found himself scouring his entire body, trying to scrub away everything he was feeling or had ever felt about anything. In a way, it was symbolic, or at least Kyle thought so. He was leaving his old life behind, starting anew. It was a reluctant change but necessary given the circumstances.

He tried not to feel too sorry for himself, since self-pity was something he was unfortunately prone to. Instead he tried to focus on the good. He was powerful now, yes. The next day there was going to be one less pedophile in the world and that was a plus. And things with Cartman... well... they were almost comfortable. Friendly. Domestic. That almost disgusted him. He tried to pin his newfound feelings on some sort of roundabout, fucked up Stockholm Syndrome, blaming it all on being stuck in an isolated space where he had to rely on Cartman for nearly everything. But, that wasn't it. It was the fact that Cartman *was* doing everything. He felt like things had really begun to change and he wasn't sure if he liked it or not.

He ended up jerking off in the shower, for the first time in a month at least, absolutely not thinking about Cartman at all. No, sir. It was half to prove to himself that he was still able to have an orgasm, despite his current affliction (he could) and half because he hoped the budding affection for Cartman was merely the result of some kind of pent up sexual frustration (it wasn't.)

By that point, the water had begun to run cold, even to his chilly core temperature, so he turned it off, still deciding to sit there, naked, on the shower floor for another good, long

while before getting out and toweling off. He redressed in his same, old clothes, and stopped to stare at himself in the mirror again. He looked the same as before, only wetter.

Finally, he forced himself out of the bathroom, back into the main room. He paused in the bathroom doorway, though, listening for Cartman's even breathing to make sure he was still asleep. He was, still snoring, a little louder now. He had rolled onto his other side, though, towards the center of the bed and now all Kyle could see of him was the back of his head, all shaggy with brown hair, and his upper back and broad shoulders.

Kyle swallowed and sat back down at the desk, picking up his book once again, opening it to where he had last left off. He let out a somber sigh and returned to his reading. In the morning, things would be different, he told himself. And, in the morning, they were.

Let's Kill Tonight

Kyle and Cartman found themselves in Cartman's truck in a suburban neighborhood, idling along the side of the road somewhere. Cartman was behind the wheel, chugging a Red Bull and smoking a cigarette and Kyle was in the passenger's seat, sunglasses on and hood up, squinting at his phone in the afternoon sun.

"We should have done this earlier," Kyle said, still scrolling through his phone. "You should have woken up when you said you were going to."

"Excuses, excuses," said Cartman. "We got a late start because *you* took a four thousand year shower at like 7 AM."

That was true. Kyle had decided at the last minute that he needed to shower again to psych himself up with another whole "rebirth" symbolism ceremony or whatever. He just scoffed and continued looking through his phone.

"Are you sure you saved the address?" Cartman asked, skeptical. He exhaled a cloud of smoke and flicked his cigarette butt out the crack of the window.

"Yes!" Kyle snapped. "Of course I saved the stupid address? Why wouldn't I save the address? Use your brain."

Cartman scoffed. "Somebody got up on the wrong side of the coffin today," he said and Kyle glared at him from behind his shades.

"It's fucking bright out here and it's making me go feral or something." Kyle complained, his eyes burning. He paused to rub them with his sleeve and then turned back to his phone. "Here," he said, holding it out to Cartman.

Cartman took it and read the address. "Oh," he said. "It's literally right over there."

He put his truck back in gear and drove slowly around the block. The house they were looking at had yellow siding and white shutters and a row of hedges out in front. The driveway was short and empty and lead to a small garage. There was about a half of an acre of wooded underbrush behind the house, poorly maintained and far overgrown. There were no lights on in the house.

"This fucker must be at work," Cartman observed as they drove past. "What do you want to do?"

"What do *I* want to do? What do *you* want to do?" countered Kyle.

"What do you mean what do *I* want to do!?" said Cartman. "You're the one who's gonna be killing this guy!"

Kyle sighed. "God, we really didn't think this through, did we?" He shook his head. "Alright, here's the plan. I need to get to his computer."

"Why?"

"Because I need to make sure this is the right guy before I go ahead and murder him in cold blood!" Kyle yelled. He squinted at the house as the came up on it again. "I need to get inside that house."

"You're gonna break in in the middle of the day?" Cartman asked.

"Well, I have to do *something!*"

"No, that was me being impressed with you, gaywad," Cartman said. "That takes balls."

"Oh," said Kyle, trying his hardest to ignore the pounding in his chest. "Well, go around the other side of the block and park. We can get to the back if we go through the trees."

Cartman did as Kyle said and parked his truck in a church parking lot. By the time he got out, Kyle had already taken off down the sidewalk and he hurried to catch up with him.

"What if it's Chris Hansen?" Cartman asked as they pushed through the underbrush.

"Like from *To Catch a Predator?*"

"Yeah, what if it's Chris Hansen and he thinks *we're* the freaks."

"I don't think that's how it works," said Kyle.

"If it *is* Chris Hansen," Cartman continued, ignoring Kyle's reply, "are you gonna kill him? Like, we came all the way out here, I think you might as well kill him."

"Probably not," Kyle said, slowly.

A few minutes and several bramble snags later, they crept slowly onto the back porch.

Cartman looked around. "No security cameras so that's a plus. Probably should have checked for those *before* trespassing but, oh well."

Kyle closely eyed the doorknob. "I'm gonna pick this lock."

Cartman scoffed. "No, you're not. *I'm* gonna pick this lock." He pushed past him, shooting a smirk, snapping on a pair of latex gloves he had stolen from the deli down the street and handing a pair to Kyle to avoid fingerprints. "It's a skill of mine."

"Yeah, yeah, of course it is," Kyle grumbled, rubbing his fingers together inside the powdery gloves. "Hurry up."

Cartman took an old Target gift card out of his wallet and slid it along the edge of the door, skillfully opening it in a matter of seconds. "Ta-dah."

Kyle raised his eyebrows. "Huh," he said.

Carefully, they crept in to the darkened house, shutting the door behind them. It was especially dim inside as the windows were covered with thick curtains. Kyle could see just fine but Cartman squinted his eyes as they adjusted to the darkness, holding onto the back of Kyle's shirt at times, to find a path in the lightless room.

"Oh, god, I hope this guy doesn't have a dog," Cartman whispered, following Kyle, stealthily, across the living room. The house seemed oddly normal and tidy for someone they were counting on to be a disgusting pervert.

"Shut up," Kyle hissed. "Go check upstairs."

"*You* go check upstairs!" Cartman said, peeking around the corner into the unlit kitchen. Sunlight bathed in through the window above the sink, brightening the room slightly.

Kyle huffed. "Fine," he said, moving quietly up the carpeted stairs. With vampirism came the ability to move almost completely silently, as if he were floating. He came upon the master bedroom. The bed was made neatly and the room seemed pristine aside from some dirty clothes on the floor by the foot of the bed. After giving himself the All Clear, he hurried down the hall, popping his head into the bathroom and the linen closet. As he came across a small, cluttered office, Cartman appeared behind him.

"I thought you were checking downstairs," Kyle said, turning to look at him.

Cartman shrugged. "There's nobody fucking down there, dude," he said. He peeked over Kyle's shoulder. "What's in here?"

"It looks like an office but you should be downstairs in case anyone comes in," Kyle scolded.

"Yeah, so he can shoot me on sight? Pass," said Cartman. "Not like I'm the best at finding hiding spots, anyhow."

"Yeah, you wouldn't fit in any," Kyle said.

"Rude ass bitch," Cartman huffed, pushing around him, into the office, immediately rifling through papers.

While Cartman combed through the file cabinet, Kyle noticed a closed laptop on the desk. Curiously, he ventured over and opened it. He sat down in the computer chair.

"What are you doing?" Cartman asked, interest piqued by the focused look on Kyle's face.

Kyle navigated through the files and documents, looking for anything that seemed suspicious. "I'm looking to see what this guy's all about," he said. He started to continue but cut himself off when he clicked on a seemingly innocuous folder. Very quickly, after glancing at the contents for just a moment, he slammed the laptop shut and turned away with a disgusted expression.

"What is it?" Cartman asked, surprised.

Kyle swallowed and shook his head. "This is a good kill," he said, finally.

Cartman's face paled significantly as he understood the implication of Kyle's words. "Christ," he said, under his breath. "Kids?" he asked in a wavering voice.

"Uh huh," Kyle said, moving out from behind the desk.

"Fuck," said Cartman, hand over his mouth.

Kyle wanted to give him a supportive touch on the shoulder since he knew that this kind of thing must have been really triggering to Cartman, who had lived it, but he couldn't bring himself to do it. Even if he had intended to, Cartman was out of the room in a second and Kyle could hear him head down the hall.

Kyle felt nauseous but, more than ever, he was ready to kill. And, on top of everything, he was starving. It had been at least two days since he had his last taste of blood and he felt like, if he didn't feed soon, he would snap. Luckily for him, his moment was coming soon.

Cartman and Kyle dicked around in the horrible stranger's house for another few hours. Kyle ended up finding a drawer with several hundred dollars in cash stashed away, which they took, and Cartman stole a bunch of snacks from the kitchen, loading up his backpack.

"Let's just fucking rob this guy blind," Cartman suggested, rummaging through kitchen drawers for anything useful or worth some money.

"Well, he'll be dead so I doubt he'll care," said Kyle, sitting up on the counter. He swallowed and tried to forget the images from the computer which were now burned into his eyes. He knew in his heart that he was ready to wreak vengeance on this awful man, despite never meeting him before in person.

Darkness began to fall outside and the two of them were starting to wonder if their target was ever coming home but, then, from upstairs where they were camped out in the bedroom, they heard a car pull into the driveway.

Cartman's eyes darted to Kyle who looked anxious.

"You ready?" Cartman asked, lips twitching up into a grin in the darkness.

Kyle nodded. He hopped from foot to foot, psyching himself up. "I got this. I can do this. I'm ready," he said. His eyes were glowing brightly in the darkness.

Cartman smirked at him. "You got this."

Kyle suddenly glanced to Cartman with a panicked expression. "Oh, god, Cartman, what if I can't do this?"

"You'll be fine," Cartman reassured.

"I know he's a terrible person but what if I can't look him in the face and kill him?" Kyle asked in a loud whisper. "What if I freeze?"

"I'll knock him out," Cartman said with a shrug.

"You will?" Kyle asked, blinking up at him.

"Anything for you, Jew," Cartman joked with a wink. His face then became serious. "I know you can do this," he said, very sincerely.

Kyle's stomach did a flip but he felt reinvigorated with bravery. He nodded firmly.

The front door opened and closed.

"Okay," Kyle whispered. He listened, cocking his head slightly, brushing the hair away from his ear. "He's in the kitchen." He paused. "He's using the sink."

"And, it's just the one guy?" Cartman asked in a low, hushed voice.

"It's just the one guy," said Kyle. He peeked out the door of the bedroom. "You can't see the stairs from the kitchen. Do you think you can get down there without him seeing you?"

"What is this? Psychological warfare?" Cartman asked, quirking an eyebrow.

"How are you going to knock him out if he sees you coming?" asked Kyle. "You need to get behind him while I distract him. He's still in the kitchen. Can you get downstairs or not?"

"Of course I fucking can," Cartman said. He slipped out the door and down the stairs, quickly and quietly. Kyle was impressed by how silently he moved despite his weight and size.

Kyle slipped down the hallway as well, watching, hidden, from the banister as Cartman tiptoed through the living room and into the downstairs bathroom without being seen. He looked up at Kyle as he eased the door closed and winked again.

Kyle let out a nervous breath and focused on listening again. He could hear the man in the kitchen close the fridge and then he could see him, for the first time, as he walked out into the living room with a beer in his hand.

He was stocky, mid-forties, with a blonde crew cut. Kyle narrowed his eyes, watching and waiting, doing mental gymnastics as he planned his attack. He watched the man head for the couch to turn on the television but, much to Kyle's horror and dismay, he sat his beer down on the coffee table and headed for the same bathroom that Cartman was hiding in.

Kyle sucked in a quick breath and knew he had to make a distraction and fast. Hastily, he kicked a closet door closed with a loud bang.

"Huh?" said the guy, attention turning from the bathroom to upstairs.

"Oh, shit," Kyle muttered under his breath, scurrying quietly for a place to hide as he heard the man start up the stairs. He only got halfway up, though, before a clattering in the kitchen sent him back down and Kyle let out a long breath that he didn't know he was holding, relieved in knowing that Cartman was in sync with his plan.

The man reached the bottom of the stairs and stepped forward into the living room, visibly anxious and confused, heading for the kitchen where Cartman was. It was now or never, Kyle thought.

Then, as silent as a shadow, he hurried back down the hallway, jumping up and swinging his legs over the banister, dropping, on his feet, to the floor, directly behind the man. He wheeled around, a look of horror on his face so satisfying that Kyle had to grin, exposing his long, pointed teeth.

Kyle was about to say something to stall briefly, a supervillain-esque monologue or whatever came to mind, but he didn't get a chance because Cartman was there in a flash, cracking a heavy, wooden rolling pin over the back of the man's skull. He dropped to the floor like a sack of flour.

"That takes care of that," Cartman said in a gruff voice, brandishing the rolling pin like a deadly weapon. He smirked at Kyle. "Dinner time, I guess, yeah?"

Kyle looked down at the lifeless, still breathing, body at his feet and he *almost* hesitated but blood trickled from the back of his head where Cartman had hit him and Kyle caught the scent instantly, like a shark in the water, his pupils dilating and his mouth beginning to salivate. He dropped down to his knees with a rabid hiss and hoisted the man up by his chest, immediately sinking his impressive fangs into his neck, haphazardly, biting down hard into the flesh. His victim, vaguely conscious, let out a gurgling groan but Kyle didn't care. Blood flooded his mouth and he clutched the body closer, tearing the fabric of his crewneck t-shirt with his strikingly sharp fingernails, a low growl resonating from his throat.

It didn't taste quite as good as Cartman's, for whatever reason, but it was still better than the blood bags he had been subsisting on for the past week, and the flavor was still rich and salty and sweet and nearly impossible to describe. And, he realized as he drank that he didn't have to stop. He could keep going and going until he had his fill and even then some.

And he did. He drank and drank until blood dribbled down his chin and onto the collar of his shirt, his stomach was full, and the man's heart ceased to beat under his fingers. He had just made his first kill.

Eventually, the gushing blood slowed to a trickle and then stopped altogether and Kyle pulled back, eyes clenched shut, panting for breath. He opened his eyes and they glowed brighter than they ever had before, his irises a nuclear green. His hair was mussed and his face was a mess, crimson all around his mouth, dripping down his chin and neck, staining his shirt. His cheeks were bright and flushed. In fact, his skin was no longer pallid and sickly looking. It was almost like he was human again and there was blood in his veins. There was also a feeling of power growing within him that he had never felt before, welling up in a great crescendo in his chest.

"You did it! That was the coolest thing I've ever seen!" Cartman cried, gleefully, beaming and pumping his fist into the air. "Oh, I could fucking kiss you, you brilliant little Jew!"

Kyle glanced up at him with his wide, wild eyes and slightly parted lips. Part of him wished he would but he was so full of adrenaline and energy that the only thing he could really

comprehend is that he felt like a god.

He rose to his feet, dropping the bloodless corpse at his feet, trembling slightly with something that almost felt like electricity, like there was a voltage to his veins, pulsing and vibrating underneath his skin. He swallowed hard and licked his lips, tasting the blood that still lingered there.

"You okay?" Cartman asked, noticing that Kyle had yet to speak.

Kyle nodded, wordlessly. He clenched and unclenched his fingers into fists, marveling at how strong he felt.

"How do you feel?" Cartman asked, staring at him eagerly.

Kyle blinked. "Incredible," he said, finally, in almost a whisper, his chest rising and falling with heavy breaths.

Cartman snorted. "Did you get enough? To drink, I mean."

Kyle nodded again. It still felt a little bit unreal to feel *full*. It had been a month of starvation at least and it was such a relief that he almost couldn't speak. It was a sense of overwhelming wholeness, like there was a universe inside him, continuing to expand and expand and expand and he felt like he could do absolutely anything. Nothing he had ever felt before could compare to this.

On top of all that, he had just taken a life. He had played God and drained a human being of his life force. And he wanted to do it again. No, he *needed* to do it again. Again and again and again.

"Cartman," he said, eventually, his voice coming out hoarse and quavering. "I think I'm a god."

Cartman laughed. "You kill one person and you think you're a god? You're a little monster, is what you are," he said. He pinched Kyle's cheek. "But you're *my* little monster," he added.

Kyle pulled away and flashed him his fangs as a warning but Cartman just grinned, unafraid.

Kyle wanted to point out that Cartman should have been scared of him and Cartman seemed to guess this because he continued.

"If you were gonna kill me, you would have done it already," he said. "Now, come on, let me drive you back to the motel so I can get back here and clean up this mess before dawn."

Kyle nodded and he felt like all he'd been able to do was nod. Cartman patted him firmly on the back, gently guiding him towards the back door, leaving the body on the floor behind them.

Little Monster

When Kyle got back to the hotel room, he was still high on life and drunk with power. He had talked the entire car ride from the suburbs and Cartman was amused, to say the least. Cartman came in behind him and shut the door, leaning against it as he watched Kyle flit about the room, pacing wildly.

"You good?" Cartman asked, smirking. He had never seen Kyle this wound up about anything before and it was a little amusing.

"Fucking phenomenal!" yelled Kyle.

Cartman laughed, scrunching up his button nose. "Okay, well, I'm gonna go take care of business. You gonna be alright while I'm gone?" he asked, raising his eyebrows. He hated to ask but Kyle was currently a little unhinged.

"Of course," said Kyle. "I am invincible."

"Right," said Cartman. He hesitated a little, hand on the doorknob. "You're not going to slaughter a village or burn down the motel before I get back, right?"

Kyle frowned, hopping up on the bed on his knees. "No," he said, rolling his eyes.

"I'm just asking because you're acting a little crazy, Jew," Cartman said. "Not that I'm not completely here for this, I just... well... you know."

Kyle squinted at him. "Know what?"

Cartman shook his head. "Nothing," he said. He licked his lips. "So, anyhow, be good, you little monster," he teased, opening the door, giving Kyle a final grin. "I'll be back soon."

As the door shut behind him, Kyle got back to his feet. He felt like his life force was bigger than the vessel it currently inhabited. He felt like a superhero. He wanted to scale buildings and leap off bridges and whatnot but he knew he couldn't. He was stuck in this motel room for the night, feeling too big for the vessel he inhabited as well.

He headed to the bathroom to look in the full length mirror. He hardly recognized himself. His hair was a tangle of frizz and curls, sticking up at every angle. The blood caked on his mouth and chin and neck had dried into a crusty mess. His eyes were glowing a neon green and his cheeks were still flushed with red.

Adrenaline still buzzed through his veins and clouded his head with delusions of grandeur. He wasn't sure they were delusions, though. He was pretty sure he was far more powerful than anyone he had ever met, in that moment.

The blood on his face was beginning to feel uncomfortable on his skin so he undressed and got in the shower. He was a little shocked that feeding had risen his body temperature so

much that he could tell the temperature of the water as it poured over him, into his hair and eyes. The water around his feet had turned red from the blood that washed off his skin as he stood under the spray.

He scrubbed his naked body with a travel sized bar of soap, running his hand up his stomach to his chest. He had never found himself to be particularly good looking but he found himself entranced by the feeling of his body under his fingers, like it was someone else's and he was horribly attracted to it. He was almost ashamed at how horny he was, considering he had just killed someone, but he couldn't help it. The pent up power surging within him and the heat in his veins had fueled him with some sort of carnal energy and he found himself getting hard.

He didn't want to form a habit of jacking off in the shower, like he had done every day for months when he first hit puberty, but he was unable to stop himself from tracing his fingers up the length of his cock, wrapping them around it, and stroking quickly. He let out a whooshing exhale, tangling his other hand in his hair.

"Ah, fuck," he muttered, under his breath.

He felt extremely narcissistic masturbating to the thought of himself and his mind slowly strayed from that night to the first time he had drunk from Cartman's neck and he had pinned him to the bed in retaliation. The thoughts merged together into one libidinous fantasy where he was drinking from Cartman's neck, straddling his lap, and Cartman had his big hand on his cock, frantically jerking him off. It made him feel insane but, frankly, it sent him over the edge and he came with a loud, choked off groan, every muscle in his body tensing all at once. He hated to admit it but it was undoubtedly the best and most intense orgasm of his entire life.

He sighed deeply and rinsed off, stepping out of the shower and on to the bath mat on the floor, grabbing a towel and drying himself off. He wrapped the towel around his waist and went out into the living area, getting a fresh change of clothes from where he had put them away neatly in the dresser. He dressed in clean boxers, black sweatpants, and a gray t-shirt. He was beginning to feel calmer now, after a shower and an orgasm. He went back to the bathroom and combed his hair in the mirror.

His reflection stared back at him, looking mostly like the Kyle he remembered. Then, without the haze of adrenaline clouding his mind and judgment, he was hit with the horrifying realization that he was now a murderer.

"Oh god," he said to himself, reaching up to gingerly touch his face, unsure if it was real or not.

He couldn't believe that he had done this. He knew it was a good kill and he probably saved the lives of some kids in the future, but it had gone against everything he had ever thought about himself. He was Kyle Broflovski. Sure he had a bad temper and a knack for getting into trouble, but he was a nice Jewish boy! He was smart and kind and he always considered himself to be a good person. He was afraid that, now, maybe he wasn't. Killing a man felt like it was easier for him to do than it should have been. He was quick and ruthless and, the worst part was, that he didn't feel remorse for doing it. Not even a little bit. It was disquieting.

The only thing he felt bad about was just how easy it was and it scared him to his very core.

He stumbled out of the bathroom and sat down on the bed, tipping his head backwards and pressing his palms to his eyes.

"Jesus Christ," he muttered to himself.

The more he thought about it, the more it affected him and, soon, he found himself beginning to tremble, almost vibrating with panic. He forced himself to muster the ability to crawl back on the bed, up to the pillows, laying down and curling up into a ball on his side, tucking his knees up under his chin. He sniffled softly, falling into some kind of shock over the past few hour's events.

It only took another hour or two before Kyle had almost entirely convinced himself that he was some sort of irredeemable monster and a violent, homicidal maniac. Just then, Cartman sauntered in, tossing his duffle bag on the ground by the door. He stopped and cocked an eyebrow at Kyle, all curled up on the bed, when he saw him.

"Uh, hi," said Cartman.

Kyle didn't respond verbally, right away, but pulled his limbs closer to his chest. He felt the mattress dip as Cartman sat down on the side of the bed.

"You're shaking," Cartman said, concern in his tone.

"I'm fine," Kyle said. He was trying to sound indignant but it came out sounding small and unsteady.

"What's wrong?" Cartman asked, obviously not buying it.

Kyle shot a thorny look back at him, over his shoulder. "What do *you* think?" he snapped. He immediately felt bad for speaking harshly when Cartman was just trying to help. He rolled back over, away from him. "Sorry," he mumbled, reluctantly.

Cartman frowned. "Look," he said. "you did something good tonight."

"It doesn't feel good," Kyle said. "I don't give a shit about that guy but it was just... too easy! I shouldn't be able to kill someone so quickly and feel nothing afterwards." He buried his face into the pillow, fighting back the frustrated tears that wanted to come. "I should feel remorse or something, shouldn't I?" he asked, muffled in the pillowcase. "I should feel something. I shouldn't want to do it again."

Cartman sighed and the bed creaked as he shifted, laying down on his side, as well, facing Kyle's back.

"Here," he said, almost a little gruffly. He slung an arm over Kyle's side, gripping him tightly and pulling him back against his wide chest.

Kyle froze. It felt like the wind had just been knocked out of him. Cartman's arm was strong and thick around him and Kyle could hear Cartman's heart beating his chest, up against

his back, warm and soft. Kyle wondered if Cartman could feel his heartbeat as well, as it was hammering rapidly behind his rib cage, thumping loudly in his ears.

"W-what are you doing?" Kyle stammered, eventually regaining the ability to think and speak.

Cartman made a vague noise and shrugged slightly. "I don't know," he said. "Holding you, I guess. That's what you do when people are, like, trembling on a bed in a fetal position, right?"

Kyle couldn't believe how someone could sound so unsure and yet so confident at the same time. He swallowed. "I couldn't tell you," he said, hoarsely.

"This isn't even nearly as gay as when you would drink my blood so stop being weird about it," Cartman muttered into the still damp hair on the top of Kyle's head.

"I'm not being weird about it!" Kyle exclaimed, his voice cracking a little. And, as if to prove a point, he rolled over, facing him, pressing himself into Cartman's front.

He heard Cartman suck in a sharp breath through his nose and worried that he went too far, but only for a minute because he seemed to relax and he adjusted himself, slipping his other arm underneath Kyle's body and bending his knee slightly, bringing it up over Kyle's leg.

"Okay, well, as long as you're not being weird about it," Cartman said in a low voice.

"Wouldn't want that," said Kyle.

Cartman cleared his throat, quickly. "Anyhow, it was a good kill," he said. "That guy deserved what he got and you don't feel bad about it because you know that as much as I do." He ran his fingers, idly, along the bumps of Kyle's spine, giving him goosebumps. "The fact that you feel bad about killing that guy at all is more than he's worth so don't worry too much about it."

Kyle was a little surprised at the wisdom Cartman was currently spouting off. He nodded against his chest. "Okay," he said.

They were both very quiet for a while, just listening to the other breathe in the silence but, soon, Cartman spoke again.

"You're... You're warmer than I thought you'd be," he observed.

"You've touched me before," Kyle said.

"Yeah, but usually when you had your literal vampire fangs stuck into my neck or something so your body temperature wasn't really on the forefront of my mind," Cartman scoffed.

Kyle snorted. "I *am* warmer now, though," he said. "I think drinking a lot of blood raises my body temperature."

"Makes sense," said Cartman.

"I think it makes me more human."

"Or less human," Cartman added. "Because you were fucking insane for an hour or so there."

"Simultaneously more and less human," said Kyle. "Schrodinger's Human."

Cartman breathed a laugh. "More like Schrodinger's Asshole," he said.

"What does that even mean?"

"Oh, you know," Cartman said, not explaining at all.

Kyle snickered against Cartman's chest. He inhaled deeply and caught Cartman's scent. He smelled nice, familiar and musky, a little like coffee and a little like his Old Spice deodorant. He rubbed a bit of Cartman's shirt between his fingers, absently.

"How was hiding the body?" Kyle asked after a while.

Cartman shrugged. "Fine, I guess. Nobody's ever going to find him. And, even if they do, they're not going to be able to identify him, so I think we're safe. Got in and out of the house with no problems." He glanced down at Kyle, quickly, and back up, licking his lips. "When do you want to do it again?" he asked.

Kyle hadn't thought about it yet. "I'm not sure. When I get hungry again, I guess. I don't know how often I'm supposed to eat and I don't know how long this lasts. Being satisfied, I mean," he said.

Cartman hummed. "We'll make a new profile tomorrow," he said. The corner's of his mouth twitched into a smirk. "You can be the kid this time."

Kyle groaned. "I don't want to be the kid."

"Come oooooon," said Cartman, squeezing him a little tighter in his round arms. "You'll be cute."

"Not promising," Kyle scoffed.

"I'll convince you," Cartman said, but didn't elaborate. He let out a small, contented sigh and yawned. "I'm tired," he said.

"Then sleep, stupid," said Kyle.

He was wondering if Cartman would pull away, and he did, slightly, but just for a moment as he turned off the light next to the bed, leaving them bathed in only the warm, dim light from the lamp across the room. He kicked off his shoes and returned to the embrace, pulling Kyle tightly to him, nuzzling his face in the top of his hair.

"G'night, my little Jew monster," he mumbled.

Kyle's chest felt tight but he still slipped his leg back between Cartman's, tangling them together.

"Goodnight, Cartman."

He heard Cartman make a quiet sound of satisfaction and, very soon, his breathing evened out, slow and deep, as he fell asleep.

Kyle's fingers found their way up under the hem of Cartman's shirt, grazing gently against the soft skin, tracing idle patterns there. He sighed, pinching his eyes shut. He was in far, far too deep and he knew it. The verdict was in and his heart had, unfortunately, made up its mind about this big, pretentious asshole. As he listened to him snore quietly, he was struck by just how endearing he found him. It was despicable.

He tried not to dwell on it but it was kind of difficult because he was currently pressed up against his body. He also tried not to over-analyze what Cartman's whole deal was with this whole cuddling scenario. It was certainly something, alright.

The entire ordeal was really stressing him out. Mostly because Cartman was no longer disposable to him, if he ever really had been. He knew he could never let anything happen to him while they were out there killing degenerate perverts and racist scumbags. It complicated things.

But, there wasn't really anything he could do about that now. Instead, he let himself drift off to sleep as well, warm and comfortable.

Hit and Run

The next day, Kyle woke up first, still wrapped up in Cartman's embrace. He was torn between the urge to stretch and the good will to not wake Cartman up. He decided on the former, lifting his arms up and stretching out, all the way down to his toes. Cartman stirred and groaned, rubbing his eyes with his sleeve and yawning.

Kyle pushed out of his grasp, sitting up on the bed. He knew fully well that his hair was a complete mess, as it usually was after sleeping while it was still wet. He tried to smooth it out with his fingers but it just popped up again to no avail.

Cartman snickered, behind him. "Nice hair, Sleeping Jewty," he said.

"Did you just call me Sleeping Judy?" Kyle asked, quirked an eyebrow.

"No, *Jew*-ty. Like Sleeping Beauty but, instead of being a beauty, you're just a Jew," Cartman explained.

"Thanks," Kyle said, dryly.

"I'm kidding, stupid," said Cartman, stretching. He cracked his back, loudly, and Kyle winced.

Kyle hopped up off the bed and went into the bathroom, fixing his hair as well as he could with a flat brush. When he came back out, Cartman was eating a snack cake, leaning back on the pillows. Kyle checked the time on his phone.

"Oh, damn," he said. "It's like two in the afternoon." It surprised him. Usually, he never slept in so late, even back when he was human. And, now, he didn't need to sleep in the first place and still found himself oversleeping. He blamed Cartman.

"No wonder I'm so fucking hungry," Cartman said with his mouth full. He stuffed the rest of the cake into his mouth and got up, stripping down to his boxers and changing his clothes while Kyle tried to look busy on his phone.

"You're always hungry," Kyle retorted.

"True," said Cartman, "but for real, I'm gonna go get food. You want anything?"

"No," said Kyle. "I'm not hungry." He was still pretty full from his fresh kill the night before.

Cartman scoffed. "Okay, fine, whatever," he said. He slipped into his shoes and grabbed his wallet off the desk. "I'll be back soon so don't do anything cool without me."

Kyle rolled his eyes. "I'll try not to," he said.

Cartman shut the door and Kyle was alone in the room once again. He sighed and crawled back into bed, grabbing the remote from the night stand and turning on the TV. The last time

he had watched TV was when he was sitting with his parents, watching the news, spaced out, on the night he supposedly killed himself. It made him feel a little sick to think about and he wondered how his family was doing.

He flipped through the channels, eventually deciding on the news once again. Being hidden away from the outside world was making him feel a little isolated and he was hoping that catching up on current events might help him feel a little more like a person again.

Despite this, he still didn't end up paying much attention to it. Instead, his mind wandered. He thought of South Park and Cartman and blood and Stan. Everything was so confusing.

He knew he would have to feed again soon. He was still mostly content from the night before but he already felt the warmth dissipating from his veins and the blush fading from his cheeks. Aside from that, he craved it. More than the blood itself, he craved the power. The godliness. The feeling of utter invincibility. It was like a drug and, after his first hit, he was addicted. He was addicted and he would do anything for another fix. He was afraid, though, of what that "anything" might entail.

He was interrupted, then, very suddenly, from his existential nightmare of a daydream, by something the news anchor had said on the TV.

"And now, in case you haven't been tuning nightly, we will remind you that this week is Colorado's Missing Persons Week, and, every night we'll be showing you missing people from the Denver area in hopes that some of them can be found. If you have any information on any of the following people, you are urged to contact the appropriate authorities immediately."

"Oh no," Kyle gasped as a montage of missing people from his area flashed on the screen.

Before he even saw it, he knew what it was going to be but it still shocked him to his core nonetheless.

He recognized the third face in the slideshow as the man he had drained the life from the night before, apparently reported missing by his girlfriend early that morning. Kyle wondered if his girlfriend had known about his intentions or the folder full of child porn on his laptop. If she did, he thought, she should be next on his list. He finally had a name for the face, though. Frank Humphries. It was an unflattering name for an ugly person and Kyle found it fitting.

The revelation that there were people looking for this man already had Kyle nothing but a bundle of nerves. And what he saw next made it even worse.

He was about to change the channel but the very last person on the list took up the screen just before he did and he was so startled that he dropped the remote down the crack of the bed.

It was his own face staring back at him.

They were using his senior picture and he remembered getting it taken not too long ago. It was a charming shot of him in his favorite dark green sweater, starched white collar peeking out beneath the neckline. His hair was neater than it usually was, his head was cocked

slightly to the side, and he was leaning up against the side of the school building, shoulder against the rough sandstone bricks. He didn't tend to take smiling photos of himself, if he took any at all, but he was smiling, wide and genuine, in this one. He remembered why, when he looked at it.

He and Stan had scheduled their appointments to get their senior pictures taken at the same time. Stan had gone first and was hanging around until Kyle finished with his session. Kyle, ever insecure, was having trouble following the directions of the photographer and, instead of looking suave or aloof or happy, he just looked pissed off and the photographer let him know so.

"Come on," Stan had said, peeking over her shoulder. "Do what Cartman always says."

Kyle had frowned. "I don't want to do anything he says ever!"

"No come on." He had smirked and puffed out his chest and, in his very best, deep, boisterous Cartman impression, said "Make love to the camera, Kyle!"

The sheer ridiculousness of the phrase and Stan's surprisingly accurate imitation of Cartman's voice and intonation had been enough to make Kyle break out into a grin, which the photographer had finally managed to capture. It was probably his favorite picture of himself.

However, he was fairly nauseated by the sight of it on the grainy motel television screen at that moment. Whatever blood was in his veins turned to ice and he was consumed by fear and guilt.

People assumed he was dead but they were still out looking for him. His parents were still clinging onto some shred of hope that he was still alive. He could be recognized at any point if he left the motel room. Thousands, if not millions, of people in the Denver metropolitan area were seeing his face broadcast to them right at that moment. He felt like he might pass out.

By the time Cartman got back from his fast food run, Kyle was having a full blown panic attack, pacing around the hotel room.

Cartman paused in the doorway, cocking an eyebrow at him. "I got you McDonald's," he said.

Kyle shot him a frenzied glance. "Cartman, I don't want your McDonald's," he muttered.

Cartman shrugged and sat down on the end of the bed, opening the paper to-go bag and taking out a Big Mac wrapped in paper. "Fine, suit yourself," he said. "More for me, I guess."

"Cartman, I am having a *crisis*," Kyle snapped.

"I can see that," Cartman said, taking a bite of his cheeseburger. "I'd ask you why but I'm pretty sure you're going to tell me anyway. Are you going to be having a panic attack *every* time I leave the room or what?"

Kyle frowned. "Fuck off. Did you know it's fucking Colorado Missing Persons Week or whatever?"

"Nope," said Cartman.

"Well, neither did I," said Kyle, "until I turned on the fucking news and they're showing my picture *and* the picture of the guy we killed to the entire goddamn city!"

Cartman raised his eyebrows. "Oh, shit. Really?"

"Yes," Kyle hissed. He paced around again, running his fingers through his hair. "We have to go someplace else."

Cartman nodded, stuffing a french fry into his mouth. "Okay. Where?"

"Oh god, I don't know," Kyle said, pressing his knuckles to his lips. "We just need to get distance. Anywhere is fine."

"I hear the Pacific Northwest is lovely this time of year," Cartman said with a dramatic bat of the eyelashes.

"Pacific Northwest? Like Portland or Seattle?"

"Something like that," said Cartman.

"Seattle," Kyle said. "Stan's going to school in Oregon, I don't want to be too close to anywhere he's going to be."

Cartman nodded, his mouth full. "Makes sense. When do you wanna go?"

"Tomorrow? Or maybe nightfall. As soon as possible," Kyle said, pursing his lips. He shifted back and forth on his feet. "I can drive."

"*I* can drive, Jew," said Cartman. "Don't worry about driving. Focus on not doing... whatever it is you're doing."

"I'm not doing anything!" Kyle yelled.

"Yes you are! You're being all twitchy and vampiric!"

Kyle huffed and forced himself to stand still, trying to ignore the anxiety that buzzed under his skin. He managed for a few seconds, on principle, but then lost control of it and paced around a few steps again. "God! I'm just..." He pinched the bridge of his nose. "I'm terrified, Cartman," he said in a small, shaky voice.

Cartman held out a french fry to him. "French fry?" he offered.

Kyle scowled. "No, thanks," he deadpanned.

Cartman shrugged and popped it into his own mouth and continued to eat his cheeseburger.

Kyle continued to frown. "You know, you could at least *pretend* to be concerned," he said.

"I am concerned!" said Cartman. "Just let me finish my food first, damn! Not everybody can slam down some dudes entire blood volume and be good to go for the next couple days!"

Kyle scoffed but waited, impatiently, arms crossed.

Cartman finished his food and wadded up the paper bag and tossed it into the trash. He got up, went to the bathroom, and came back, sitting back on the bed, against the pillows.

"Okay," he said, finally. "Now, come here."

Kyle cocked an eyebrow. "Huh?"

Cartman rolled his eyes. "I *said* come here."

"Where?"

Cartman gestured emphatically to himself and the space beside him. "Jesus, do I have to spell it out for you?"

Kyle hesitated, shifting his weight from one foot to the other for a moment, looking at Cartman, warily. "Again?" he asked.

"It calmed you down the last time," Cartman said and Kyle hated that he was right.

Half reluctantly, Kyle got up on the bed on his knees and scooted up towards the top, flopping down next to Cartman, onto his side. This time the positioning was a little different, with Cartman laying mostly on his back with one of his arms underneath Kyle's body, curling up around his back, the other arm crooked and tucked behind his head. His hips were twisted so his legs brushed up against Kyle's, locking their ankles together. Kyle was then pushed up on his side so that one arm slung across Cartman's middle and his head rested on his chest. It wasn't as intimate as it had been the night before but it was more domestic. Familiar. After the initial stiffness had faded, Kyle was relieved to find the tension seeping from his bones. He sighed.

"See?" said Cartman. "Now, relax."

"You know, this is pretty gay," Kyle said, after a moment.

Cartman opened his mouth to speak but closed it again, exhaling through his nose. "Well," he said, slowly, picking his words carefully in his mind beforehand, "I *am* gay. So, by default, doesn't that make everything I do at least a little bit gay?"

Kyle stopped breathing. With his head against Cartman's chest, he could hear his heartbeat pick up significantly. Kyle swallowed. "Oh," he said.

So Bebe *was* onto something. Kyle was impressed. And by impressed, he meant he was absolutely astonished. But, he knew this, really, didn't he? Deep down he had always known that Cartman was gay too. It was queer intuition. It didn't do anything to dull the shock, though.

Cartman laughed, nervously. "I mean, you are too, though, right? Double gay."

"Double gay," Kyle repeated.

"Uh-huh," said Cartman.

"But what about Heidi?" Kyle asked. "You guys were a thing for, like, a million years."

"Eh," said Cartman. "Sex is sex, if you really don't think about it while you're doing it."

"Cartman! That's terrible!" Kyle scolded, propping himself up on his shoulders a little just to make sure Cartman could see his displeased expression.

"Ay!" Cartman cried in defense. "I didn't *hate* her. She's just, you know, not my type."

"And your type is... men?" Kyle asked, a little disbelieving.

"Don't act all high and mighty just because you came out first, douchebag," Cartman said, frowning. "But, I mean, who *really* came out first? The gay chicken or the gay egg?"

Kyle narrowed his eyes at him. "You're a... gay egg," he said, finally.

Cartman chuckled and Kyle could feel his breath against his ear.

"So, what happened with you and Heidi, then?" Kyle found himself asking. "Did you tell her you were gay? Was it tragic?"

Cartman snorted. "No, I, uh, kinda ghosted her after prom."

Kyle sat up a little again. "Cartman!"

"What!? I was a little busy being your fucking human juice box!" said Cartman.

"Don't blame it on me," Kyle said, furrowing his brow. "It's not my fault, jackass! You would have had plenty of time to break up with her properly!" He shook his head. "You pussy," he added, just for good measure.

Cartman laughed again. "Jeez, Jew, if I didn't know you were a huge fag, I would have thought you were into her."

"I'm not into her!" Kyle yelped. "That doesn't mean I don't think you should have treated her with respect! She's nice! I don't know why she liked *you* of all people." Kyle had been wondering that a lot lately, but not from Heidi's point of view.

"I see you drank your Respect Women Juice this morning, Kyle," said Cartman, nodding solemnly.

"Oh, fuck off," said Kyle. Contradictory to the sentiment, though, he curled up tighter against Cartman's side.

Cartman giggled and sighed. "Oh, Kyle. Kyle, Kyle, Kyle," he chided. "Can't get enough of this, can you?"

"Shut up," Kyle growled. He pulled back, away from him, slightly, crossing his arms over his chest. He glanced over at Cartman who was watching him with an amused expression. "What?" he snapped.

"Nothin'," said Cartman. "You're just funny."

"I am *not*," Kyle retorted, just to be contrary.

"Sure you are," said Cartman. He rolled a little onto his side, bringing his arm down from behind his head, tucking it under Kyle's arms. He closed his eyes and inhaled, deeply, letting out with a sigh. "I'm going to sleep," he said.

"Going to sleep? You only woke up at two in the afternoon!"

"Yeah, well, we're leaving here tonight and then I've gotta drive through the fucking wild, wild west for twenty hours so I'm gonna take a nap for a little bit."

"Or," Kyle said, "you could just let me drive."

"Yeah, maybe," said Cartman.

Kyle hummed and considered getting up to make preparations but Cartman was so warm and soft that he found himself drifting off again too.

Super Evil Stuff

Cartman tossed the last bag into the back of his truck just as Kyle shut the door of the motel room for the last time. He tossed Cartman the keys.

"You wanna go give these back and check out?" he asked.

"Nah, just leave 'em in the door," said Cartman. "I don't give a shit."

Kyle hopped in the passenger's seat. "You think that's a good idea?"

"It's fine," said Cartman, starting the engine, backing out of the parking lot. "It's not like I booked it under my real name."

Kyle quirked an eyebrow. "Oh yeah? What'd you book it under?"

Not taking his eyes off the road, Cartman fished his wallet out of his pocket and took out an ID card, handing it over to Kyle. "Take a look," he said.

Kyle looked at it and frowned. "Mitch Conner? God, Cartman, is this the fucking Jennifer Lopez thing all over again?"

Cartman laughed. "Funny story about that, actually," he said. "Turns out I was severely mentally ill!"

"That's not a funny story!" said Kyle, looking somewhere between annoyed and concerned.

"No, not really," said Cartman, "but it's not a big deal. I figured I owed homage to my childhood with this one, though."

Kyle handed the ID back and slumped back in his seat. "I guess so. You *were* pretty fucked up."

"Damn straight, I was," said Cartman.

"I mean, you're still an asshole, but I'm less worried about your sanity these days," Kyle said.

Cartman cracked a small grin. "Gee, thanks, Jew. You were worried about me?"

"Peripherally," Kyle said, rolling his eyes.

"Oh, hold on a second," Cartman said, rooting around in his pocket again. "Here, I made you one too."

He handed Kyle another card. It was well made and pretty indistinguishable to a real ID. The photo on the card was of him. It was actually the same picture from his real ID that was probably floating somewhere in the South Platte River. He vaguely wondered how Cartman

had gotten it but wasn't really all that surprised that he had. The name was Nicholas Nicholson and the state was New Jersey. Kyle scowled.

"Cartman!" he exclaimed. "Nicholas Nicholson? Really?"

Cartman snorted. "Hey, appreciate it. I worked hard on that for you," he said. "I even made you an organ donor."

Kyle stared at the card a second longer and shook his head, sticking it into his front pocket with a sigh. "Thanks, I guess," he said.

Cartman nodded. "Anyhow, I'm fucking starving again. What's open at eleven PM?" he asked. He thought for a moment and then parked along the curb.

"What are you doing?" Kyle asked.

"Come on," Cartman said, gesturing to a building on the corner, across the street, "let's go to the bar."

"No!" Kyle stammered. "That's an awful idea! Somebody could recognize me! We are leaving Denver *because* someone might recognize me!"

Cartman rolled his eyes. "It'll be fiiiiine," he said. "Nobody's gonna give a fuck at the bar. Plus, it'll be dark and we can sit in the back. You can hide behind me."

Kyle wanted to make a snarky comment in regards to Cartman's size in response to that but held his tongue.

"And, here, wear this," Cartman continued, reaching around behind his seat. He produced a black baseball cap, which he firmly planted on Kyle's head. He inspected it for a moment before flipping it around backwards, instead.

"There," he said with a nod of approval.

Kyle blinked. "This is stupid."

"Come ooooooon, Jew," said Cartman, leaning over the center console to give Kyle a pleading look. "It's a last hurrah for the great fuckin' state of Colorado."

Kyle let out a long, laborious sigh and unclipped his sunglasses from his shirt collar, haphazardly slapping them on over his eyes. "Let's get this over with, I guess."

"Yes!" Cartman exclaimed, punching the roof of his truck with his fist, excitedly. "I *knew* you weren't a complete loser, Kyle, I just knew it."

Kyle shook his head, resignedly, getting out of the truck. He stuffed his hands into the pockets of his hoodie, shuffling his feet on the pavement as he, quite reluctantly, followed Cartman across the street.

The place was crowded around the bar but there were a few tables in a dark, back corner that were unoccupied and they took the farthest one.

Kyle tried not to look at Cartman who was grinning at him from across the greasy wooden table but he, eventually, gave in and glanced at him. "What are you looking at?" he asked, sounding bored.

Cartman snickered. "Nothing, you just look like *such* a douche."

"Fuck off," Kyle huffed. "Go get your food or whatever so we can go soon."

"Yeah, yeah," Cartman said. He stood. "What do you want?"

"I don't want anything," Kyle said. "I'm not hungry."

"It's gonna be a long drive."

"I'll eat when we get to Seattle. If you know what I mean."

"Yeah, okay, whatever," Cartman said, turning and heading for the bar.

Kyle watched him leave and then made off for the bathroom, quickly checking his reflection in the mirror to make sure he was disguised enough. He wasn't. Not really. Not for his own taste, but he figured there wasn't much he could do about it at the moment. He left the bathroom and began to make his way back to the table.

On his way back, though, his ears pricked up as he heard a familiar, cutting slur through the idle bar chatter. Now, as a nice Jewish boy, Kyle was used to witnessing antisemitism. Cartman liked to tease him with mocking insults but there was no real malice in it. He, himself, had also had more violent hatred directed at him a few times, where he actually felt unsafe. As is the life of a Jew.

At this point in his life, he could immediately pick up on and identify the tone people used when they really, truly hated him and his people. This was one of those times.

Fortunately, it wasn't directed at him, but was part of a conversation between a particularly belligerent young man and his friend. Kyle glanced around quickly, as he walked back to his seat, and spotted the offending person quickly. Kyle knew his type all too well. He swallowed hard and his eyes flashed. Maybe he could use a pre-road-trip snack after all.

He sat down again at the table in the back and waited for Cartman to return, drumming his long fingernails on the table, impatiently, never taking his eyes off of this guy. He tried to delve into a little more of this guy's character based on his conversation and mannerisms and appearance.

He seemed to be in his late twenties and he continued to openly discuss his racial beliefs to his companions. Kyle did note that the people there with him seemed a bit uncomfortable. However, he knew that, if they chose to be there with him in the first place, they weren't saints either. There was no use focusing on them as a group, though. He wasn't sure he could take all of them at once. He figured he'd focus on this particular outspoken antisemite.

He had a shaved head and a leather jacket with a red arm band. There was a tattoo on one of his hands of the German iron cross and he had black boots with bright red laces. Kyle only got a glimpse of it for a second but, when the guy turned in his seat to watch a waitress walking past, Kyle could clearly see a swastika patch on the front of his jacket.

Kyle was beginning to get thirsty.

At that point, Cartman came back over to the table with a basket of chicken wings and two beers. He sat down and slid one across the table to Kyle. Kyle blinked at it.

"What's this?"

"What does it look like, dipshit?" Cartman asked, popping the top on his own drink. "I bought you a drink. I figured you'd need it."

Kyle stared down at it and then glanced up at Cartman. "You're supposed to be driving."

Cartman scoffed. "You think I'm gonna get wasted on one beer? Kyle, come on. Do I look like a lightweight to you?"

Kyle frowned and turned his gaze back to the guy he had been watching. Cartman noticed.

"What?" Cartman asked, licking buffalo sauce off of his thumb.

"Shoelace code," Kyle said, seemingly out of nowhere. "What does red mean?"

"On black boots?"

"Yeah."

"Um, neo-Nazi, I *think*," said Cartman. "Or maybe that you killed somebody? I don't really know. Why?"

Kyle gestured his head subtly towards his target. Cartman followed his gaze and raised his eyebrows when he spotted him. He glanced back over at Kyle and the corners of his mouth twitched up into a grin.

"You found one in the wild, then," said Cartman, seeming amused and a little excited.

"Do you think we can do this?" Kyle asked.

"Hell yeah," said Cartman. "As long as he leaves alone."

"It doesn't seem like he was invited with these people," said Kyle.

"So, he's a party crasher *and* a Nazi," Cartman mused. "We'll wait him out."

Kyle picked at the bottle cap of his beer with his fingernail, finally deciding to pop it off with a hiss. He took a sip. It was cold and malty. He didn't really like beer, he decided, but figured

he would try to drink some since Cartman bought it for him. He wasn't sure when he started caring so much about Cartman's feelings but he didn't like that either.

He drank about a quarter of the bottle and then slid it towards the middle of the table.

Cartman looked up at him from his basket of wings. "Did this guy say something to you? Because, like, yeah, you're a dirty Jew but *I'm* the only one who's allowed to call you a dirty Jew."

Kyle squinted at him behind his sunglasses, scowling. "No, but *you* shouldn't call me that either!"

"Whatever," said Cartman, sucking the meat off of his last chicken bone.

Kyle sighed, slumping back in his seat, still keeping his eye on the prize. He was beginning to get impatient as he watched this loser down a shot from across the building.

Cartman wiped his mouth and hands on a napkin and tossed it into his basket. "Does he look like he's leaving soon?" he asked Kyle.

"Maybe," Kyle said, paying particular attention as the guy got up and went up to the bar. "He's either getting another drink or paying his tab."

"Cool, cool," Cartman said, stretching in his seat, bringing his elbow around the back of the chair, looking around idly. Then, suddenly, he froze for a second before turning quickly back to Kyle and ducking his head on the table. "Fuck, fuck fucking fuck," he muttered. "Jesus fucking Christ."

"What is it?"

"Okay, don't freak out, but Stan's here."

Kyle's stomach turned to ice and he instinctively glanced around, frantically. Cartman was right. It was most definitely Stan Marsh in dirty jeans and a brown flannel shirt. His black hair was messy and unkempt and he glanced around slowly as he walked in.

Kyle bent his elbow on the table and hid his face as casually as he could with his hand. "What the fuck do we do? What do we fucking do?" he whispered harshly, panicking.

"We gotta go," said Cartman, quickly getting to his feet while Stan had his back to them, grabbing Kyle by the wrist and hauling him out of his seat as well. "Now."

Kyle gave one last longing look at the guy he had been waiting so patiently to murder before turning, reluctantly and abruptly, and following Cartman.

Kyle couldn't, for the life of him, figure out why Stan would have been there in the first place. He thought maybe it was just a freak coincidence but Kyle didn't really think Stan would be in Denver at a seedy bar on a Thursday night purely by chance. Then, that left the question of *how* he had known he, or Cartman, to be precise, was there in the first place.

He tailed Cartman closely, putting his hands up on his back to urge him to move faster, hoping they would be able to get out before Stan turned back their way. They were almost through the door, into the small antechamber before the second set of doors, when Stan turned around. Cartman, though, anticipated this, and was faster. He turned on his heel and pressed Kyle up against the vestibule wall with his body, hiding them both from view.

Kyle panted shakily against his warm, broad chest, balling up his fists in Cartman's brown leather jacket, pressing his face into the fabric to obscure himself as best he could. He could hear Cartman's heart pounding in his chest.

"Just wait a minute and then we'll make a break for it," Cartman said in a low voice, his breath hot against Kyle's ear, causing him to shudder slightly.

"Okay, okay, okay," Kyle muttered under his breath, mostly trying to reassure himself that this wasn't going to all come crashing down.

After a few agonizing seconds, Cartman stepped back, bringing Kyle with him by the shoulders, and the two of them dashed out the door and across the street to where Cartman had parked his truck.

Kyle hurried around the side, bending over with his hands on his knees, trying to catch his breath and quell the panic that was coursing through his veins. Cartman got down on his knees, reaching his arm up into the wheel well, feeling around blindly in the dark. He found nothing there and then moved to the next one, finally pulling back with a small, black device in his hand.

"Motherfucker," Cartman snarled. He held his find up for Kyle to see. "The bastard's been tracking us."

"Son of a bitch," Kyle hissed, not really directed at Stan, but at the circumstance. He tossed the baseball cap that he was wearing onto the hood of the truck, flicking his sunglasses up onto his forehead.

Cartman got to his feet and tossed the tracker at the ground, crushing it onto the ground with a hefty stomp of his shoe. "Nice try, Darsh," he growled, grinding it into the sidewalk with his heel. He motioned to the truck with a nod of his head. "Come on, let's go."

Kyle was about to get it, hand on the door, when he happened to glance across the street one last time just as the Nazi from earlier exited the bar, alone, turning and walking down the sidewalk, away from them. Kyle froze and swallowed thickly. He glanced at Cartman and then back to the stranger.

Cartman gave him a warning look as he stood with the driver's side door open, half inside. "No," he said, in a tone much like you would threaten a misbehaving dog. "Kyle." He repeated his name until he met his gaze. "Get in the truck."

Kyle took his hand off the door handle.

"Kyle, don't you dare. We have to go," said Cartman.

Kyle gave him a look somewhere between apologetic and desperate, and then took off in a sprint, crossing the street.

"GOD DAMMIT!" Cartman cried.

Kyle pursued at a distance and was delighted when his target turned to take a shortcut through an alleyway. Kyle trotted forward a bit further, turning the corner of the alley as the man was about halfway through.

Kyle was a little disappointed that Cartman hadn't followed him, leaving him to his attack on his own. He knew he had really pissed him off by ignoring his instructions, but he was doing what he felt was right, like it was the work of God.

"Hey," Kyle shouted, getting the attention of the skinhead ahead of him. He was slightly surprised at his own gumption, having the man turn and face him instead of creeping up silently and ambushing him behind. But, this was personal for him. He wanted to savor it.

"Yeah?" the guy said, turning and stepping towards Kyle in the low light. The alley was dark and the only illumination came from the streetlamps near the street on either end.

Kyle continued to walk forward until he was almost right up in front of him. The guy was taller and built sturdier than him. He didn't look the slightest bit afraid or unnerved then, neither did Kyle.

"I'm assuming you don't like Jews," Kyle said, tilting his head to the side, glancing him up and down.

The man sneered at him. "You'd assume correctly," he said.

Kyle shook his head a little, almost laughing. "That really sucks for you."

"Oh yeah?" the guy said, stepping forward a little more, as if welcoming a fight.

"Yeah." Kyle gestured with his hands, sort of towards himself, but also just spreading them out in front of him. "Mazel tov, bitch," he said.

The man spat at him and tossed out another slur. "What are you going to do about it?" he goaded.

Just then, with the squeal of tires, Cartman pulled up in his truck, directly on the other side of the alley, blocking any exit the man might find to take, should he decide to use it.

He got out and started in from the other direction, coming up from behind. He crossed his arms over his chest. He was wider and broader than the skinhead asshole, and loomed over him, casting a long shadow.

"Hey, Kyle, this guy bothering you?"

Kyle grinned, his eyes lighting up in the darkness. "You're just in time," he said.

"Couldn't let you have *all* the fun," said Cartman. "I see you're playing with your food."

"What the fuck is this about?" asked the guy, starting to get a little nervous, unsure if it was from Cartman's size or the way Kyle's eyes had begun to glow unsettlingly. He glanced between the two of them. "This your boyfriend or something? Fucking queers." He tossed yet another additional antisemitic slur at Kyle again.

Cartman looked ready to clock this guy then and there but Kyle was only mildly annoyed and rolled his eyes.

"Actually, do you have any other insults or is that really the only thing you've got?" Kyle asked with a sigh. "I mean, really, I've heard you say that three goddamn times tonight."

"Oh man," Cartman said, shaking his head. "This is just embarrassing for you." He plopped his hand down on the guy's shoulder. "The Jew isn't even impressed with your slurs. Amateur, really."

Quickly, the man shoved Cartman away from him. "Don't fucking touch me you fat fucking faggot!" he exclaimed.

Fire flared in Kyle's chest. "What did you just fucking call him!?" he cried, his voice ripping from his throat with an inhuman snarl. The luminescence from his eyes almost doubled in brightness and he took another step forward.

The Nazi stepped back, startled by the sound, slowly beginning to realize the danger he was in. "What the fuck are you?" he stammered, noticing Kyle's long teeth and glowing eyes.

Kyle frowned. "Would it be cliché to say 'your worst nightmare?' Because, if not, your worst nightmare. If that's too cliché, just a Jew."

Suddenly, the man scrambled backwards, away from them and Kyle was worried that he might escape. He locked eyes with him and Kyle took a deep breath, planting himself firmly on the ground.

"Stop," he said in a solid, commanding voice.

The man's eyes glowed back at his for a second and he stopped.

"Come back," Kyle said, still maintaining eye contact, tilting his head back slightly, looking down from behind his eyelashes.

The man walked back over to him.

When Diego had come to visit Kyle in the night, months ago at that point, he had mentioned that hypnotism was an ability vampires could learn to use, not that Kyle ever thought he would be able to figure it out for himself. But, it seemed like he just had. It was like flexing a muscle he didn't know was previously there. He was fascinated and amused by his own power, drawing in his prey like a moth to a flame.

"Huh," Cartman said, watching, intrigued by what was happening before him.

"Don't scream," Kyle said, backing his mark up against the brick wall, grinning with his sharp fangs. "I hope this hurts."

With that, he pounced, surging forward with a feral hiss, and sinking his deadly bite into his neck. The deserving victim let out a strangled, choked off groan as Kyle fed. He wrestled against him but Kyle was stronger, gripping him firmly by the throat, pointed fingernails digging into the tattooed flesh there.

The man continued to struggle for a few minutes longer, but Kyle was merciless, and then he was eventually still.

Kyle pulled back and let the lifeless corpse drop to the ground at his feet, giving it a kick to the side for good measure. He glanced over at Cartman with his wild, neon green eyes, and saw that he was watching him with a stony expression in the dark.

Kyle reached down and tore the swastika patch from the Nazi's jacket, holding it up in front of him like some sort of bittersweet trophy.

"Do you have a lighter?" Kyle asked Cartman in a hoarse, quavering voice.

Cartman dug in his pocket and handed it to him, wordlessly, and Kyle lit the patch on fire and dropped it to the ground next to the body. When it had fully burnt out, he stomped on the ashes and spat on it.

He cleared his throat. "Now we can go."

Highway to Hell

Cartman was pissed.

Kyle knew this because of three reasons:

Reason Number One: He was currently flying down the interstate doing twenty miles over the speed limit.

Reason Number Two: There was a scowl so fierce on his face that Kyle thought he might get wrinkles from the way it creased his brow and drew lines around his mouth.

Reason Number Three: He hadn't shut up about just *how* pissed off he was since they had gotten back in the truck in Denver.

Kyle sat idly in the passenger's seat and listened as Cartman went on and on and on. It had been less than half an hour since they had started off again and Kyle was pretty sure it was going to be a very long drive.

"And, I mean, *really*, Kyle!" Cartman exclaimed, continuing his train of thought as he drove. "That was really stupid. I mean, It was *so* stupid!"

"Yeah, yeah," Kyle said, dismissively, slouching in his seat and crossing his arms. He knew Cartman had a point. To kill that man, out in the open, without any plan, was really, really risky. He was lucky he hadn't been caught outright. But, still, it was only in Kyle's nature to be argumentative.

"I mean it!" said Cartman, tearing his eyes away from the road for a moment to shoot Kyle a turbulent look. "Stan knows we were there tonight. Actually, he doesn't know you're even alive but he knows that *I* was there tonight. If he's been tracking me, he's got enough information to put me at the scene of *two* murders. As if it isn't enough that he already thought I killed *you* or something."

"Stan's not going to do shit," said Kyle with a huff, turning his gaze to the window, watching the roadside whiz past in a blur of blackness. Cartman was making an unfortunate amount of sense and he pretended it didn't bother him.

"Why would he bother tracking me if he wasn't going to do shit?" Cartman growled. "He already swore his revenge or whatever. He's gonna pin this on me and you know it."

"He *can't*," said Kyle. "He doesn't know where we're going to go. He'll never find us."

"You'd better hope so," said Cartman. "I don't want to go to jail for helping you out."

"This was *your* idea," Kyle retorted, glancing back over at him with a fierce frown. "If you're so worried about the consequences, maybe you should stop trying to help me."

Cartman was quiet for a moment but Kyle could almost feel the silent animosity he was exuding.

"Maybe I should," he said, finally.

Kyle sucked in a sharp breath and scowled, trying not to let himself feel the hurt that shot through his chest like a bullet. "Fine," he said. "I can find my own way to Seattle."

Despite his tense, sulking look, Cartman breathed a laugh out through his nose. "No, you won't."

"Oh yeah? Watch me!"

Cartman noticed Kyle's hand on the door handle and he flipped up the child safety lock so he couldn't throw himself out of a moving car to prove a point.

"Relax, Jew," he said. "I'm not ditching you. I'll still help you even if you're being a huge psycho bitch."

"Yeah, sure, *I'm* the one being a bitch," Kyle scoffed.

Cartman laughed again and then watched the road carefully for a few minutes, mostly silent as he drove, aside from humming softly along to the radio. It was the first time since they had started off that he looked contented and Kyle was glad for the quiet.

"So, uh," Cartman said after a few minutes, clearing his throat, "what was that? That thing you did to that guy in the alley?"

Kyle quirked an eyebrow. "Killed him?"

"No, not *that* part, idiot. When you told him to stop and then walk right back over to you. What was up with that?" Cartman clarified.

"Oh," said Kyle. "Um, I'm not sure, exactly. That guy, Diego, told me that some vampires can do hypnosis or something. I'm not quite sure how I did it."

"Hm," said Cartman. "Well, uh, it was pretty cool."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

Cartman glanced at Kyle for a second and there was something almost palpable in the air between them. Then, Cartman's eyes shot back to the road and he tapped his fingers on the steering wheel.

"Anyhow, I'm pretty beat," he said. "You wanna drive 'til morning?"

"Yeah, sure," said Kyle, sitting up in his seat.

Cartman pulled into a gas station a mile or so down the road and, after a bathroom break and a convenience store snack, and a full tank of gas, they switched spots in the truck.

Kyle noisily adjusted the driver's seat to account for the difference in height, bringing himself up closer to the steering wheel and Cartman leaned the passenger's seat back into a reclining position, pulling an old blanket up over his lap, resting his head against the window.

"Good fucking night," Cartman said, closing his eyes.

And then they were off again.

Throughout the night, Kyle drove through all of Wyoming and into the upper corner of Utah by the time the morning sun began to peek over the horizon. He liked driving, especially at night. It was quiet and almost serene, the only sounds the low rumble of the engine, Cartman's even breathing in the passenger's seat, and the soft dream pop on the radio.

He found the time to let his mind wander. He had been doing that a lot lately, usually when Cartman was sleeping. Kyle glanced at him out of the corner of his eye. He looked almost peaceful, which was a big deal for Cartman, though, even in his sleep, his eyebrows were knit together slightly. His lips were slightly parted and his chest rose and fell with his breathing. Every once in a while he would swallow and Kyle watched his Adam's apple dip in his throat, then darting his gaze over a bit, eyeing the faint pinkness of a particularly bite-shaped scar on the side of his neck.

He hadn't noticed it before, the small, healed-over divots in the skin there, where he had pressed his teeth into him on graduation night. He couldn't see them now but he imagined Cartman must have also had a myriad of similar scars peppering his forearms and wrists from their multiple bloodletting sessions over the past few months. Kyle almost felt bad about it, marring up Cartman's body and all. Somewhat, though, they almost made him want to mark him up more, to sink his teeth into his skin again and taste the adrenaline in his blood.

Kyle dragged his tongue along his lower lip and tore his gaze away, inhaling sharply through his nose, focusing intensely on the road in front of him.

"Fuck," he exhaled, almost silently, to himself.

Soon, the sky began to fade from starry black to misty blue as the sun approached the horizon and, as soon as it broke over the ridge of mountains to the east, turning the clouds a bright gold, Kyle had to reach over the console and dig his sunglasses out of the glove compartment as his eyes began to sting and water. This motion, however, roused Cartman from his sleep. He yawned and blinked as his eyes adjusted to the light, looking out the window at the passing scenery.

"Good morning," said Kyle, flipping down the sun visor.

"Yo," said Cartman. "Where are we?"

"Utah," Kyle said. "Almost to Idaho, I think."

"More like You Da Ho," said Cartman, snickering to himself.

Kyle let out a heavy sigh. "You've been awake for like fifteen seconds and you're already exceeding my daily quota for putting up with the dumbass shit that comes out of your mouth."

"You look like a blind person," Cartman observed, looking Kyle over with his sunglasses, which he was still squinting behind. "Pull over and let me drive before you crash and kill us both."

"I'm already technically dead, but okay," said Kyle, pulling off onto the shoulder of the road and putting the truck in park, getting out.

He passed Cartman on his way around the front and brushed up against him, accidentally, bumping into Cartman's side. The sun was waking up the sky and, at the same time, making it incredibly difficult for Kyle to see where he was going. He mumbled an apology as he did and Cartman took him by the shoulders, gently, to guide him around his path. Kyle blinked, his stomach churning weirdly from the interaction.

"Uh, thanks," he said, stumbling around to the passenger's side, climbing in.

Cartman looked over at him, still squinting from the brightness and nodded towards the small, cramped backseat behind them. "You wanna lay in the back?" he asked.

Kyle paused, considering it. "Yeah, okay," he said, finally.

He rose up and gracelessly climbed over the center console, squeezing between the two seats, head first. Cartman glanced at him in the rear view mirror for a split second, watching him with a keen, fixed expression, then quickly back to the steering wheel.

Kyle fell, clumsily, into the back seat, falling down onto his back, staring up at the roof, his hair flopping messily into his eyes, sunglasses fallen off in the struggle. He let out a sigh.

"You know, you're not the smoothest vampire, are you?" Cartman remarked.

"I resent that," said Kyle, finding his sunglasses on the floor and slipping them on over his eyes once again.

"Yeah, here," said Cartman. He grabbed the scratchy wool blanket he had been using when he slept and tossed it over the seat. It landed on top of Kyle with a soft whump.

Kyle murmured a little and pulled it up over his head. "Thanks."

Cartman turned his head to look at him and laughed. "It looks like I'm smuggling you across the border or something. You good?"

"Yes," Kyle said, his voice muffled by the blanket. "We can go."

"Alright," Cartman said, putting the car in drive and pulling back onto the highway. "Let's get breakfast."

The dynamic duo arrived in Seattle in the late afternoon, pulling up to a motel that looked pretty much the same as the one in Denver. The inside was a little nicer than Denver's, though; the carpet was newer and the walls weren't chipping with paint. Still, there was only one bed. Kyle was immediately suspicious because the odds of all the double rooms at this motel being booked as well were slim. But, he didn't really care. They had made do just fine in Colorado. And, besides, it was probably cheaper this way.

Cartman threw an armload of bags down in an unceremonious heap by the door and sat down on the corner of the bed. "Fuck, dude," he said. "I need a nap and a shower. And food."

"I call showering first. I feel disgusting," Kyle said, stretching out his legs a bit. The front of his shirt was still stained with blood from his kill in Denver and there was dried blood under his fingernails.

"You look disgusting," Cartman said for no real reason, just to be annoying.

Kyle scoffed. "And you look like a fat ass piece of shit, so I guess we're even," he said.

Cartman tried to look angry but laughed instead. "I hate living with a vampire," he bemoaned. "You're a terrible person."

"And you're the most insufferable asshole I've ever met so shut the fuck up," Kyle countered, leaning against the wall with crossed arms.

"You love it," said Cartman, scrunching up his nose.

Kyle wouldn't admit it but he kind of did. Instead, he hummed uncertainly and shook his hand in a so-so gesture. "Mmm, not so sure about that."

Cartman fell onto his back on the bed. "Go take your shower so then I can take one," he said.

"Fine," Kyle said, pulling his shirt off over his head as he turned for the bathroom, tugging it up over his pale, freckled shoulders.

"Hey," Cartman said, suddenly.

Kyle turned back towards him. "What?"

Cartman frowned and looked away, his round cheeks turning pink. "Never mind," he said.

Kyle quirked an eyebrow. "Uh, okay?" he said, tilting his head to the side, confused. He shut the bathroom door and finished undressing in private. He showered quickly, rinsing off any dried blood that he had missed when he had done a makeshift cleanup with wet wipes while they were on the road earlier. When he finished, he left the bathroom, clad only in his boxers, toweling off his wet curly hair.

Cartman was on his laptop, sitting cross-legged on the bed, and he glanced up. "Jesus," he said, "Can you put some freaking clothes on or is this just Vampires Gone Wild?"

Kyle frowned, digging around in his backpack for a clean pair of clothes. Two-thirds of his outfits were currently bloodstained and he figured he'd have to find a laundromat to wash them at soon. He found a clean, white sweatshirt and tugged it on over his head. "This is absolutely not the first time you've seen me without clothes on. Don't be weird," he said, pulling out a fresh pair of olive skinny jeans.

"I'm not being weird!" said Cartman, moving his computer from his lap. "*When* have I ever seen you without your clothes on?"

"I don't know! We've been friends since we were three-years-old. We had gym class together like every year. I'm sure you've seen me at some point!" Kyle argued.

"Yeah, but I wasn't, like, staring at your ass in the locker room!" Cartman said.

"Why are you staring at my ass now!?"

"I'm not!" Cartman cried, his cheeks flushed all hot and red. "Shut the fuck up!" He rose to his feet and headed for the bathroom, whacking Kyle upside the head for good measure as he passed him. He slammed the bathroom door and Kyle blinked.

"Alright, then," Kyle said, continuing to pull on his pants. He laid down on his stomach on the bed and pulled Cartman's laptop close to him, opening the internet browser. He Googled the news back in Denver to see if there was any coverage on his heat of the moment kill in the alley.

Oh, boy, was there.

Kyle's stomach felt sick.

It seemed like the only thing that they were even reporting on at that moment. Kyle couldn't really blame them. A Nazi found dead in an alley, drained of all his blood, and left for someone to find made a hell of a story.

He gulped and closed the laptop, sitting up and tucking his knees up to his chest. He felt like he really made things difficult for himself. He was afraid things would get linked back to Cartman and it would be all his fault. He hated that he cared but, now that he was pining or whatever, he felt a lot more stressed out about the whole situation. Being a vampire with feelings for a human was complicated. He was beginning to sympathize with Edward Cullen.

Soon, Cartman got out of the shower, returning to the main room with his damp towel slung over his bare shoulder. He had his same old jeans on as before but lacked a shirt.

"And you told *me* to put *my* clothes on," Kyle chided, laying back onto his side, watching as Cartman looked for a clean shirt.

"Shut up," he replied, finding a plain black t-shirt and shrugging it on.

Kyle noticed he hadn't shaved and the hair along his jawline was beginning to grow in brown and thick. It was a good look for him. It made him look older and his jawline more pronounced.

"I think we should lay low for a little while," Kyle announced as Cartman took a creaking seat in the office chair that was pushed up against the room's resident desk.

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah," Kyle said. "People are talking in Denver. I don't want anyone to link us to being up here."

"I don't know what you're going to do for food, then," said Cartman, swiveling idly in the chair.

Kyle made an unsure humming sound. "Point taken," he said. "Do you want to make a new profile?"

Cartman stood and grabbed the laptop off the bed, bringing it over to the desk with him. "Yeah," he said. He shot Kyle a grin over his shoulder. "This is my favorite part."

"Oh, I bet it is," Kyle said, rolling his eyes.

Cartman spun the chair around, holding his phone up with the camera facing Kyle who was now laying on his stomach on the bed once again. "It's your turn to be the kid, though," he said.

Kyle sighed and looked into the lens, not making much of an expression. Just looking with focused, prudent eyes.

Cartman licked his lips absently and took a few pictures. "That'll work," he said, staring intently down at his screen. "Gimme a minute."

Kyle nodded and crawled to the edge of the bed, leaning over the edge, into his backpack that rested on the floor nearby. He pulled out a book. He had only spent one night reading since the two of them set off from South Park and he figured he'd try and finish this novel while Cartman worked. He opened it and laid back down on his front, lacing his ankles together.

Together, in relative quiet, they each did their own thing for a while, Kyle reading on the bed and Cartman hard at work on his electronics at the desk. It was a companionable silence and, as Kyle read, he couldn't help but feel like it was oddly domestic. Having Cartman as his partner in crime was habitual and easy, more so than anything else ever had been.

Eventually, Cartman turned back to face him, grinning widely, holding out his phone.

"Look at you," he cooed.

The photo he had snapped several minutes earlier had been doctored up so that Kyle was basically unrecognizable. Instead, he looked like a wide-eyed preteen with pouting lips and long eyelashes. Even his hair had been edited to be longer, wild and red and frizzy. Cartman had even gone the extra mile of making his cheeks appear bright and rosy as opposed to their actual pallor. Kyle squinted at the phone.

"Interesting," he said.

Cartman laughed. "I've got talent for this, I'm telling you," he said.

"You've got a lot of talents," Kyle said, not meaning for it to sound as much like a compliment as it did. "None of them respectable," he added for good measure, just so Cartman didn't think he was actually impressed with him or anything.

Cartman snorted, turning back to the desk. "Thanks, Jew," he said. "Ready to go live again?"

"Yeah," Kyle said. "I'm ready if you are."

"Hell yeah," Cartman said, uploading the new profile picture to the site he was on. "To Catch a Predator Part Two, here we come."

Dismembered and Decapitated

Two nights had passed and Kyle and Cartman walked side by side down the dark streets of Seattle late at night. Cartman stared down at his phone in the darkness, following his GPS as they searched for the location of their next victim.

Richard Green, the man they were after this time, was a part time youth minister and full time pedophile. Cartman hadn't been surprised when he found out he was part of a religious institution. Apparently he had suffered trauma there as well and was more than happy to be part of eradicating him off the face of the earth. The two of them had also deduced, through Cartman's skilled roleplaying, that this man also looked down on Jews, citing Catholicism to be the one true religion and stating that Jewish people had gotten what they deserved over the years. That didn't sit too well with Kyle, of course.

Cartman had parked a few blocks away to avoid suspicion outside of the building they were planning on infiltrating. It seemed, however, that the two of them had taken a wrong turn and gotten turned around in the darkness.

"Don't vampires have some sort of magical sense of direction or something?" Cartman asked, checking the addresses on the apartment building they were currently passing.

"No?" responded Kyle, cocking an eyebrow. "Are you thinking of fucking pigeons?"

"Maybe," said Cartman. He glanced up. "Oh, never mind. We don't need your vampire pigeon senses because I just found it."

They walked around the building, into an alley, and Cartman checked his phone again, hitching his heavy duffle bag up higher on his shoulder.

"Okay," he said. "How are we going to do this because this guy is currently home *and* lives on the third floor?" There were no fire escapes and neither of them felt like waltzing right in through the front door was a very good idea.

"Is that the window?" Kyle asked, stepping back until his back was pressed against the bricks of the adjacent building, looking up.

"I think so," said Cartman. They hadn't gotten a chance to scope out the interior of the apartment complex beforehand but Cartman was pretty good at plotting things out spatially in his head.

It was a brisk night for early June but the window was open just a crack, as if by pure chance. Kyle looked up at it for a minute longer and then nodded, rubbing his palms together, eagerly. "Okay," he said, "I can get up there."

Cartman gave him a skeptical look and scoffed. "I one-hundred-percent do not think you can get up there."

"I can do it. I know I can," Kyle promised. "I can parkour up the side of this building, no problem."

"Go on, then," said Cartman. "You manage this and I'll head on in and ding-dong-ditch this sucker while you come in through the window."

Kyle nodded. "Alright," he said. He took in a breath and let it out quickly, bouncing in place as he psyched himself up, before dashing towards the building and making a vertical leap, catching the mortar between the bricks with his fingernails, digging them effortlessly into the masonry, suspending himself against the wall. He latched the toes of his shoes into a makeshift foothold and with a small grunt, he hoisted himself up further, grabbing the outer sill of the second floor window. He pulled himself up onto it with his newfound upper body strength until he was resting on his knees. He stood, balancing carefully on the stoop and sucked in another quick breath before he leaped up from his perch, deflecting off the air conditioning unit, catching, this time, the ledge of the targeted window with his fingertips. He slipped a little and had to gouge his nails into the cement, a little painfully this time, but then he kicked off from the wall with his feet and flipped up and around the side, finally reaching the third floor. He rose up and gripped the side of the window frame, leaning just out of view if someone was to look out from the inside. He let out a short huff of both relief and triumph and looked down at Cartman with an elated, victorious grin.

Cartman couldn't help but return the expression. "Alright, damn," he said, pulling on a pair of rubber gloves. Then he nodded and headed around the side of the building, creeping in through the front door.

Kyle waited by the window. Inside the apartment, there was still a few lights on so he figured his target was awake and hoped to god he was alone. After a few minutes, Kyle heard Cartman's heavy handed knock at the door. He watched carefully as the man they were stalking walked through the living room and opened the door. The hall was empty, as Cartman had bolted quickly after creating the distraction. The man looked back and forth, stepping out into the hallway. Kyle took this opportunity to silently slide the window up the rest of the way and slip inside.

He decided to leave the window open. The cool night breeze streamed in, blowing the silky, floor length curtains out in a billowing puff. He hid nearby in the darkness, watching and waiting.

The man felt the wind blow in from behind him and turned in the doorway, looking confused and a little unnerved. He stepped back into his apartment, leaving the door ajar, the light from the hallway breaking in through the darkened living room.

Then, the door slammed shut, and Kyle observed with an amused smile as Cartman locked the door behind him, sauntering in like he owned the place. Typical Cartman. Cocky as ever.

"What are you doing!? Who are you!?" said the guy, startled.

"Hey, Rick," said Cartman, picking up a trinket off the small table by the door, turning it over idly in his hands, before setting it back down, walking forward and looking around. "Nice place you've got here."

Kyle had to stifle a laugh. He felt like he should, ethically, feel bad about tormenting these men and then slaughtering them, but he didn't. After his foray with the Nazi back in Denver, Kyle found he kind of enjoyed playing with his food beforehand. There was a certain kind of thrill to it that invigorated him and made the kill even more satisfying. Cartman seemed to enjoy it too.

"I'll call the cops," their target said.

"No, you won't," Kyle said, emerging from the shadows as if on cue. The fear on the man's face as he realized that he was outnumbered was extremely gratifying. When he turned, Kyle looked him straight in the eyes as if seeing into his wretched soul. "Don't scream," he said, his eyes glowing brightly as he flipped on his hypnosis switch. He still wasn't entirely sure of the logistics of how that worked but he was fairly okay at making it happen at this point.

He and Cartman had practiced it for a few hours over the past few days. Initially, Cartman had insisted Kyle practice on *him* and Kyle succeeded in making him punch himself in the face. After that, Cartman had suggested an alternative approach and they sat in a busy cafe together for a while and Kyle would make anyone close enough who locked eyes with him do something of increasing stupidity while Cartman tried not to snort hot coffee out his nose. It was a mostly successful day and Kyle wondered if there were any more secret vampire powers he was going to be able to unlock someday.

Kyle was fairly proud of himself as he watched in the darkness as the man before him struggled with the fact that he couldn't scream, seemingly unable to make anything above a hoarse whisper escape his lips.

Kyle tilted his head back, slightly, looking on with an amused smirk, the glow from his eyes casting green light across his cheekbones. He glanced from the man to Cartman, who was watching, intrigued, in the darkness. Kyle licked his lips, quickly, as they locked their gaze. Cartman had an expression on his face that was a cross between eager and fascinated. He looked on, seeming more captivated by the way Kyle moved and reacted, almost gliding along the floor as he spanned the living room, than keeping an eye on their victim.

Eventually, Kyle managed to tear his eyes away, glancing back to the terrified man who stood in the center of the room. Kyle tilted his head to the side, unblinking.

"Do you know why I'm here?" he asked.

The man didn't respond. Instead, he repeated the Hail Mary prayer under his breath over and over again, his eyes pressed tightly shut.

"Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and in the hour of our death. Amen."

He repeated this again and again as Kyle looked on, lips pursed, arms crossed.

Cartman spoke up then. "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the

righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself," he quoted.

"Ezekiel 18:20," muttered the man in response.

Cartman nodded solemnly. "You brought this on yourself, Rick. We're here to cleanse by divine fire. Blah blah blah. What-frickin'-ever." He glanced to Kyle who was watching carefully nearby. "Go on, then. Do your stuff, Jew."

Kyle gave a singular nod and stepped forward. "Look at me," he said. He was aware that his hypnosis only worked with eye contact. It made things a little difficult, though, when his target wouldn't look him in the eye. It annoyed him to no end and he shifted his weight on his feet and huffed. "Come on," he said. "This is going to happen one way or another so you might as well make it easier on yourself."

The man still didn't look up and so Kyle shot Cartman a hesitant glance.

"Be merciless," said Cartman in a low voice.

"I *am* merciless," Kyle retorted, puffing out his chest with a quick breath and then lunged forward, his teeth finding flesh almost immediately.

He had gotten pretty good at tasting people's blood types over the last few weeks thanks to the blood bags he had gone through back in Colorado. He immediately recognized this as O Negative, the same type as his own and Cartman's. He knew that O Negative tasted best to him since it matched his own blood type but here, tasting another person's, he was struck with the realization that even though it was the same type and even though it was fresh blood of a kill, it still didn't taste as good to him as Cartman's did. Kyle couldn't put his finger on the difference but it was almost as if Cartman's was sweeter and richer than anyone else's. He figured he could make a fat joke or even make some pretty serious health allegations about it but he didn't think that was it. It was just *different* in a way he couldn't describe. It made him want it in lascivious ways, in his mouth and on his tongue.

For now, though, he settled for what he had to work with and drank quickly. His victim had been nearly paralyzed with fear the entire time so he went down easy without much of a fight, which was, frankly, pretty boring, Kyle thought. Despite the lack of theatrics, Cartman looked fairly pleased as he watched on, the ghost of a smirk playing on his lips as Kyle ended a life in front of him. The two of them locked eyes for a moment as Kyle finished up. Kyle's eyes were wide and wild and Cartman tensed a muscle in his jaw and swallowed thickly.

Kyle pulled back from his freshly drained corpse, blood dripping from his lips as he sucked in a sharp breath, letting it out in a short sigh, dropping the body to the floor. He dragged his thumb along his lower lip, gathering the blood that lingered there and stuck it in his mouth, sucking it clean. Across the room, Cartman made a quiet, strangled sound in his throat and Kyle frowned at him.

"What?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Cartman, turning away quickly, finding his duffle bag of supplies in the darkness. He cleared his throat. "Let's go so I can come back and take care of this guy."

Kyle glanced down at the dead body and then back up to Cartman. "Can I stay?" he asked.

Cartman raised an eyebrow. "If you want to. It's not pretty."

Kyle shrugged. "I wanna see your skill set."

Cartman barked a laugh. "Please," he said. "Anyone can get rid of a body."

"Well, I want to see how you do it!" said Kyle.

"Fine," said Cartman, shaking his head a little. He sat the bag down on the coffee table and took out a second, thicker pair of rubber gloves, snapping them on over his hands and tossed an extra pair to Kyle. "Come help me bring this guy into the bathroom. That's where the magic happens."

Kyle rolled his eyes but grabbed the legs end of the corpse and assisted Cartman in hauling it back the hallway. The dead weight was hard to carry but at least they could take solace in the fact that it would have weighed more if there was any blood volume left.

Having the body be bloodless, Kyle found, was extremely helpful.

They tossed their victim gracelessly down in the bathtub and Cartman sat his duffle bag on the closed toilet seat, bringing out the rest of his materials: a hacksaw, a massive jug filled with some kind of white powder, a second duffle bag, a respirator, trash bags, safety goggles, and a large pair of pliers. Kyle hopped up on the granite surface of the sink, leaning back on his hands, watching intently.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

Cartman looked up, grabbing the saw, waving it at him, as he got to his knees in front of the bathtub. "Gotta make him transportable."

"Oh," said Kyle. "Is that a bone saw?"

"Yeah," said Cartman. "Don't ask where I got it from."

Kyle hummed idly, surprisingly intrigued as Cartman cleaved through the man's wrists. The sickening crack of bone was almost oddly satisfying as Cartman separated the hands from the rest of the body.

"You make it a lot easier to do this considering you get the blood out of the way first," said Cartman.

"You've done this before then?" asked Kyle.

Cartman hesitated. "Um, yeah. Couple times." He glanced at Kyle out of the corner of his eye as he worked. "Expected you to be more freaked out about that, to be honest."

"Cartman, I've killed three people."

Cartman laughed. "You sure did!" He chuckled to himself and shook his head. "I've never killed anybody. Not directly. Obviously you remember the, uh-" he cleared his throat "-the Tenormans. But, um, my mom had a boyfriend when I was fourteen and I don't know what happened there but she shot him. Killed him. Aaaaand, then she had me get rid of him. So, yeah. I've got experience."

Kyle was nearly speechless. "When you were *fourteen*? Your mom just made you an accomplice to murder when you were *fourteen*?"

"Yeah, are you surprised?" asked Cartman.

"Well, yeah! I saw you like every day when we were fourteen. You didn't seem... like somebody who was going through that kind of stuff."

Cartman shrugged. "Shit happens." He held up one of the dismembered hands. "Hey, hi-five."

Kyle grimaced and crossed his arms. "Can you not?"

Cartman scoffed and rolled his eyes, giving the hand a hi-five himself. "I have to do everything around here." He sat the hands down on the rim of the tub and opened the toilet lid. He unscrewed the lid on the container of white powder.

"What's that?" Kyle asked.

"Lye," said Cartman. He took his respirator and pulled it on over his nose and mouth and covered his eyes with his goggles. "Do I look cool?" he asked, slightly muffled.

"No," said Kyle

"Okay, whatever," said Cartman. "You don't have to breathe, right? Try not to breathe for a minute."

Kyle nodded and watched as Cartman dumped a good amount of powder into the toilet water. Immediately, the water turned cloudy and began to steam as an exothermic reaction occurred. Kyle knew all about exothermic and endothermic reactions from chemistry class. The lye was causing the water to heat dramatically and become strongly basic solution that would be able to dissolve flesh. Using his pliers, Cartman carefully dropped the hands into the toilet and closed the lid. He took off his mask and goggles.

"Shazam," he said. "Making soup."

Kyle made a face. "Gross."

"You just drank like a gallon of blood and you're grossed out by a dead body?"

"It's different," Kyle said.

"Yeah, sure," said Cartman. He was quiet for a minute, just humming softly to himself as he continued to work on the body, cutting it into smaller pieces and stuffing them into a black plastic trash bag. "You hesitated," he said, finally speaking again.

"When?"

"When you were going to kill this guy. You stopped. You looked at me and you stopped."

"Oh," said Kyle. "I don't know. He kept praying and it was weird. I felt weird about it."

"Don't feel weird about it," said Cartman. "You did really good."

Kyle blushed slightly with the pinkness in his cheeks. "I just... I forgot you were Catholic."

Cartman exhaled through his nose. "Yeah. Sometimes I forget too. I don't forget that you're a fuckin' Jew, though."

"You took this one really personally, huh?" asked Kyle.

"Hey, I mean, I was a little boy in the Catholic church who seemed to draw pedophiles like a moth to a flame so yeah. I guess so," Cartman said. His voice was bitter and cold.

"Shit, Cartman, I'm sorry."

"Don't worry about it," said Cartman. He had fit most of the body parts into the trash bag by that point. There wasn't much blood to make a mess but still some trickled down the drain of the bathtub. He picked up the head with both hands. "Kyle, quote me some Shakespeare," he said.

"Dude, no!" said Kyle. "Stop being so morbid!"

"It *is* morbid, Kyle!" Cartman exclaimed. "I am dismembering the body of a guy that you killed! This whole thing is super morbid and insane! Have some fun with it, you soul-sucking Jew!"

"Do you really want me to quote Hamlet while you hold this guy's severed head? Because I'll do it if you really want me to but, like, damn, dude."

Cartman snickered and put the head down. "Nah," he said. "You'd bore me to death." He took his pliers and began the arduous task of pulling out the teeth.

"Ew!" Kyle yelped. "Why are you doing that?"

Cartman gave him a disinterested, half-lidded glance. "*Because* if he doesn't have dental records, they can't identify his body. Same reason I'm melting his hands. No teeth, no fingerprints. First fucking rule of body disposal."

"Well, *excuse me* for not knowing the rules of body disposal, asshole!" Kyle huffed. "We can't all be Eric fucking Cartman."

"You're going to have to learn these things, Jew! Since you won't turn *me* into a vampire I'm gonna die eventually and you'll have to do this yourself," said Cartman.

Kyle hadn't thought about that and the idea distressed him. He wasn't sure which part bothered him the most: being alone and doing this on his own or the realization of Cartman dying someday. He shifted where he sat, lost in thought as he watched Cartman finish extracting teeth.

When he was finally finished, Cartman tossed the severed head into the trash bag and tied it closed. He opened the toilet seat quickly to avoid any of the lye fumes and scattered the teeth in there as well. He closed the lid and flushed it.

"Now that that's taken care of go find some bleach and scrub out the tub," he said.

"I don't want to scrub out the tub!" Kyle protested.

"Just dump some bleach in there and swish it around! I've got to get this-" he gestured to the trash bag- "into here." He gestured to the duffle bag.

They got to work and Kyle scoured the bathtub while Cartman forced the body into the bag, stomping on it and just generally being rough with it. And, then, finally, they were all packed up and ready to depart, back out into the world.

Eyes on Fire

Cartman tossed the duffle bag with the dismembered youth minister into the back of his pickup truck parked in a secluded alley and took his spot in the driver's seat. Kyle was already in the passenger's seat, buckling his seat belt. Vampires seemed to be pretty impervious to physical damage but Kyle still buckled up anyhow out of habit.

"So, where do we go now?" Kyle asked. He was fairly eager to get back out into the world. He much preferred this to sitting alone in a motel room when he was all hyped up with vampiric energy after a kill.

"There's a forest a couple miles out of the city where we can dump this trash," said Cartman, pulling back onto the road.

"Okay," Kyle said, turning up the radio. A fast paced pop punk song played in the background. He leaned back in his seat and propped his feet up on the dashboard. "What do we do with it? Just leave it there?"

"You know, you ask an awful lot of questions," Cartman said, glancing over at him out of the corner of his eye. "But, yeah."

"Cartman, that's littering."

Cartman let out a loud bark of a laugh. "You just killed a guy and you're worried about littering?"

"Well, I don't care about killing assholes but I *do* care about killing the environment," said Kyle. "Stan would care about killing the environment."

"I don't give a shit about what Stan cares about," Cartman scoffed. "Do you think I'd be dragging your gay vampire ass halfway around the country if I cared what Stan thought?"

Kyle scowled. "What's *that* supposed to mean?" he asked.

"What? You're trying to tell me that you and Stan didn't have some sort of gay shit going on there?" Cartman asked.

"*What!?*" Kyle exclaimed, astonished. "No! Are you fucking with me right now?"

"No?" said Cartman, quirking an eyebrow.

"NO! God, what the fuck? You thought I was fucking Stan and Stan thought I was fucking you?! This is a fucking nightmare." Kyle shook his head, rubbing the bridge of his nose.

"Christ, *no*, I wasn't fucking Stan, you fucking troglodyte."

"Jesus, chill out," said Cartman. "It was just a question."

"It wasn't a question. It was an insinuation and I resent it immensely," Kyle huffed, crossing his arms and turning to look out the window. He was beginning to get annoyed by the way people seemed to be assuming things about him and coming to their own conclusions instead of asking him or trusting him. He hated that the two people he had been closest to had both assumed he had been sleeping with the other. It made him feel disrespected. At least, Kyle thought, Cartman was taking his word for it when he told him the truth.

"Alright, damn," said Cartman "You guys just kind of had a really, you know, co-dependent thing going on and just thought-

"I don't care what you thought," Kyle snapped. "We were friends. We were *best* friends. That's what friends do." It hurt to talk about his friendship with Stan in the past tense but it was what it was. "Not that you would know," he added for good measure.

Cartman snorted. "You know what? Fuck you," he said. "I have friends. Had friends. I think."

"We were friends," said Kyle. "We *are* friends. Unfortunately."

Cartman breathed a laugh. "Yeah, you're my Jew."

"I'm more than *just* a Jew these days, don't you think?" Kyle teased. "You're going to have to get a new line."

"I guess so," Cartman said. "My pet Dracula."

"I am *not* your pet," Kyle huffed.

"You kind of are. I help feed you. I give you a place to live. Physical affection. I tell you you're a good little vampire," Cartman listed off.

"That doesn't sound like I'm your pet as much as it sounds like I'm your-" Kyle started but then stopped and frowned, knitting his eyebrows together.

"My what?"

"Nothing," Kyle said, shaking his head. He licked his lips, idly. "Shut up and drive."

More abruptly than Kyle had anticipated, they left the city, the lines of cars and buildings merging into a lush temperate landscape. The mood was almost surreal, the bright city lights and the sheer point of the Space Needle breaking over the horizon behind him and the vast, never-ending forest before him.

The forest, like it was back in Colorado, was exceptionally dark, and the road that wound through the blackness was narrow and empty, like they were the only two people in the world. It was almost serene and the song on the radio had faded into a soulful ballad, filling the inside of the cab with sad, sleepy tones. Kyle cracked the window a bit to circulate the air. It was early June at that point and the air outside was mildly cool and dense with moisture, bringing a wet, earthy smell inside. Kyle inhaled deeply. The scent was different than Colorado, heavier and stronger, but it still smelled natural and sweet. It made him feel homesick.

"You okay?" Cartman asked, suddenly, startling Kyle from his thoughts. He turned his head, quickly, to look at him.

"Yeah," Kyle said, wondering when Cartman had started caring and asking if he was okay.

"Alright," Cartman said, watching the road ahead of him, headlights cutting through the dark. It wasn't long until he pulled over in a patch of gravel on the side of the road, leaving the truck idling. He turned to Kyle and drummed his fingers on the dashboard. "I'm gonna go stash the body," he said. "You stay here."

"Why do I have to stay here?" Kyle asked, indignantly.

"So you can be the lookout or whatever," Cartman said.

"What am I even supposed to do if somebody comes along? It's not like I can *do* anything about it," said Kyle.

Cartman frowned. "Just keep an eye out," he said, sounding a little annoyed.

Kyle rolled his eyes but nodded. "Fine."

"Thank you," Cartman spat. He got out of the truck and walked around the back, reaching over the side of the bed, pulling out the duffle bag containing the body parts, stuffing it under his arm.

Kyle watched as he came back around the front of the truck, passing in front of the headlights, illuminating him with yellow light. Kyle heard a sound, then, from behind, and realized that his job as lookout was essentially useless at that point, as another car whizzed down the road towards them, headlights blinding. Cartman froze and squinted into them as the car came to an abrupt stop in the middle of the road. Kyle sucked in a short breath and ducked down beneath the dash, coming up with some sort of heroic plan in his head to help Cartman if things went even more south.

From the floor, Kyle heard the slamming of a car door, footsteps, and then a loud groan from Cartman.

"Oh, you've gotta be *fucking* kidding me."

Then, Kyle heard another voice and it was one that he didn't expect to ever hear again. It made his blood turn to ice and a lump form in his throat. It was Stan Marsh.

"You really thought you lost me in Denver, huh?" said Stan.

"Marsh," Cartman said in a deep, even voice. "What are you doing out here?"

"What are *you* doing out here?" Stan retorted.

"None of your fucking business, is what!" cried Cartman.

"Listen, Cartman," Stan said. He sounded sure of himself but, at the same time, deeply unhinged. "There's only one reason you'd be out in the woods in the middle of the night with a gym bag."

"Yeah, and it's called camping."

"You're not camping in the woods by yourself."

"Says who?"

"Cartman," Stan said again, more firmly this time, like there was anger rising inside him.

Kyle peeked up through the windshield for just a moment, catching a glimpse of the two of them. Stan stood there in the headlights in a brown and blue flannel coat with his hands planted firmly on his hips. His hair was mussed and greasy like he hadn't showered in a few days and his face was stubbly and unshaven. He looked like a mess, honestly, and Kyle would have felt bad for him had he not caught sight of Cartman's tight, worried expression first and it made fire flare in his chest.

"Look, asshole, don't worry about it," said Cartman, gripping the duffle bag tighter to his side. "It doesn't have anything to do with you."

"Yes, it does, because whatever it is, it has to do with Kyle," Stan said.

Cartman let out a loud groan and Kyle ducked back down under the dashboard again.

"Would you shut up about Kyle," Cartman exclaimed. "I don't want to fucking talk about Kyle."

Back in the truck, Kyle frowned.

"Kyle wouldn't have killed himself," Stan said. It was something he had said back in South Park and, once again, he was right.

"I *know* he wouldn't have!" Cartman exclaimed. "I *know* that. You don't have to keep fucking telling me that because I *know*."

Stan stared at him with a tense frown and a furrowed brow. The light from his LED headlights refracted off his irises, making his eyes look an almost translucent blue. Then, suddenly, without warning, he dove forward and ripped the duffle bag from Cartman's hands, fighting him back as he grasped for it. He succeeded in knocking Cartman on his ass and, by the time he had gotten back to his feet, Stan had already unzipped the bag. The body parts were still concealed within a plastic trash bag but the outside was streaked with blood and the stench of bone marrow was strong and smelled of iron. It was obvious what was inside and Stan dropped it to the ground in horror.

"Oh my fucking god," he gasped. "I knew it. I *knew* you were a murderer! First Kyle, then Denver, and now this!"

Kyle was aghast, his hand over his mouth as he sat on the floor of the truck, unable to do anything but listen as Stan threw out accusations. He knew he had to do something.

"Listen," Cartman said, holding out his hands tentatively, "I didn't kill anybody. I'm just the guy who gets rid of the bodies."

Then, Kyle decided to act. He wasn't sure if it was to protect Cartman or to confront Stan but, either way, he opened the door and stepped out, his feet crunching on the gravel, standing tall before both of them.

"Yeah, I killed him," he said. He was vaguely aware of how he must have looked, walking out into the headlights. His eyes were dazzling green and there was still blood stained down the front of his shirt. His cheeks were flushed and he puffed out his chest, arms crossed in front of him, head tilted slightly as he stared Stan down in the night.

Stan was speechless. He looked as if he had just seen a ghost and, in a way, he just had. His mouth hung open and his eyes were wide and glistening.

Cartman stared at Kyle too with a look of awe and amusement. He broke into a wry grin and let out a giggle.

Kyle didn't look at him, instead still watching Stan as he short circuited in the middle of the road.

Stan, eventually spoke, swallowing the lump in his throat first. "Kyle?" His voice came out sounding shaky and unsure.

Kyle sucked in a sharp breath. "Hi, Stan."

"Yeah, I told you I didn't kill him, asshole," Cartman grumbled under his breath.

"You... You're not dead?" asked Stan, his voice tremulous.

Kyle made a so-so motion with his hand. "More or less," he said. He noticed that Stan's breathing had picked up until he was almost hyperventilating and he decided to use his hypnosis to chill him out a little bit. "Stay calm."

Stan's breathing slowed and his shoulders visibly relaxed. However, he frowned. "What... What are you doing?"

"I'm not doing anything," Kyle lied.

"Yes, you are," said Stan. "I'm... What are..."

He tried to power through Kyle's influence and Kyle had never seen this happen before. Cartman hadn't either. If he had known this was a possibility, he would have tried not to let Kyle make him punch himself in the face when they were practicing.

Then, finally, Kyle glanced at Cartman, just for a second, and then back to Stan. Without using his hypnosis this time, he spoke again, trying to speak to Stan's rational side.

"Stan, if you know what's good for you, you'll leave right now and you won't come back."

"What do you mean? What is going on?" Stan asked. "You killed somebody?"

"Yeah, I've killed several people at this point," Kyle huffed, shifting his weight on his feet. "It's not a big deal. There's a lot of shit going on that you don't understand and you need to stay out of it. I tried to tell you a month ago to stay out of it and you didn't and look where we are now." He tried not to sound bitter. He had missed Stan immensely and it broke his heart to see him this way and under these pretenses but Stan had refused to meet him in the middle at any point during this and it didn't feel great.

"Kyle," Stan said, almost as whisper, "what did you do?"

"Something happened. To me. I had to leave. I had to fake my own death and Cartman helped me do it," Kyle said. He sounded desperate, and he was.

"How could you just *leave* like that, Kyle? Your mom is-"

"Don't fucking tell me about my mom!" Kyle exclaimed. "I know what I did to my mom! You don't think that I hate it? You don't think that I wish I could go back? But, I can't! Things are different now, Stan, and I can't... I can't bring back the way things used to be." He turned away for a minute, shaking his head. Again, he glanced up at Stan with sad, green eyes. "Why did you come here?"

Stan stared at him with a clenched jaw. "I thought Cartman had something to do with this. With you and your disappearance. And I was right. Technically. Technically, I was right." Quickly, Stan reached into his jacket and, when he pulled his hand back out, he was holding small pistol. He pointed it at Cartman.

"Whoa!" Cartman said, putting his hands up and taking a step back. "Stan, come on."

"Stan!" Kyle shouted, his voice ripping through an octave. "Put the gun down," he said through clenched teeth.

"No," said Stan. His hands were shaking but he held the gun as steady as he could. "Why are you protecting him?"

"I'm *not* protecting him!" Kyle exclaimed. "*He's* protecting *me*!"

"From what!?"

"You wouldn't understand!"

"You're coming home with me, Kyle," said Stan. "You need to make this right."

Kyle let out a disbelieving scoff. "You think you can just *make me*?"

"Uh-oh, now you've done it," Cartman said.

"Stan, you are *way* out of line," Kyle growled. His eyes were glowing intensely by then but Stan wouldn't meet his gaze. "Look at me," Kyle commanded.

"No. I don't know what you're doing but I'm not going to look at you," said Stan.

Kyle stepped between him and Cartman, then, walking forward, towards Stan. He stopped when the barrel of Stan's pistol was pressed right up against his chest. "Go on, then, Stan. Pull the trigger."

"Kyle," Stan almost sobbed, still looking down.

"Jew, come on," Cartman said in a low voice, his brow furrowed.

"Cartman, go get in the truck," Kyle commanded.

"No fucking way," said Cartman.

"Cartman! Get in the fucking truck!"

"No!"

Kyle looked back at Cartman who was glaring at him intensely, then back to Stan. "Fine," he said. "Stan, I promise not to mindfreak you right now. Just put the gun down and look at me."

Stan hesitated. "Kyle, I don't know if I trust you right now. You haven't let me in. I don't know what's going on."

Kyle let out a sigh. "Stan," he said, "I don't know if you've realized this, but I'm not exactly human anymore."

"*What?*" Stan hissed. He glanced at Kyle who, as promised, didn't hypnotize him right away. "What are you, then?"

"Look at me and tell me what you think," Kyle said. "It's obvious when you really think about it. You should know by now."

"Huh?" Stan said, ever clueless.

"Come on," said Kyle. "You can figure it out. Don't make me say it."

Stan still stared at him, blankly, and Cartman decided to take things into his own hands, impatient and unwilling to wait for Stan to put the pieces of the puzzle together himself.

"You're impossibly fast. And strong. Your skin is pale white and ice cold. How old are you? Seventeen. How long have you been seventeen? A while," Cartman quoted, spouting off the entire reveal from *Twilight*, mimicking the voices as he did. "I know what you are," he said, finally. "Say it. Out loud. Say it."

"Would you shut the fuck up, Fatass!" Kyle shouted.

"Wait," said Stan. "You're a... a *vampire*?"

Kyle swallowed and nodded. "Yes."

Stan staggered back a pace, almost dropping his gun. "So that guy that bit you was... And now you're... Kyle..." He shook his head and then steadied his gun. "I can't let you do this. Any of this."

Kyle was stunned. "Wait, what? You're *still* not on my side? After everything..." His eyes turned furious, neon green and brilliant in the dark. "You don't know what you're getting yourself into, Stan."

"I have to do *something*! I can't just stand back and let you kill innocent people!"

Kyle let out a loud, cold laugh. "Innocent!? You think they're *innocent*? I kill people who deserve what they get."

"It doesn't matter," said Stan. Tears streamed down his face at that point, his finger on the trigger. "Murder is murder."

"Stan," Kyle snarled, his voice shaking, a quiet tempest in his chest, "don't make me kill you. I really don't want to have to kill you."

"Why didn't you tell me first?" Stan asked, suddenly.

Kyle cocked an eyebrow. "About what?"

"Being a vampire. I'm your best friend."

"You're holding a gun on me in the middle of the woods!"

"Because you told Cartman and you didn't tell me!"

"I didn't even tell him!" Kyle exclaimed. "He figured it out before I did!"

Cartman, standing out of the way, was kind of feeling like a third wheel but he was also greatly entertained. Or, he would have been if Stan hadn't been trying to kill them all. Stan was his friend. He was Kyle's friend. And, Cartman didn't want him to die but, right then, he was threatening to kill or expose or otherwise ruin them and, he hated to think it, but he wished Kyle would just go ahead and kill him already. When Kyle glanced back towards him and met his gaze, Cartman could tell that he knew that he was considering it.

The stalemate was going nowhere. Stan couldn't bring himself to pull the trigger and there was no way that Kyle was going to be able to bring himself to kill Stan.

Kyle tilted his head back and looked up at the stars through the treetops above. He let out a whooshing exhale, blinking past some of the hot tears that stung at his eyes. "Oh god," he lamented. "I'm sorry, Stan."

It didn't take him much strength at all to pin Stan up against the side of his car. Before vampirism, Kyle wouldn't have stood a chance in a struggle against him but now, at his full power, it was almost effortless. He knocked the gun from Stan's hand and sent it careening across the asphalt.

The two of them were so close that their foreheads were almost touching and Kyle grabbed the back of Stan's hair hard, yanking his head down to meet his gaze. Blue eyes met green, both full of tears, and they both shined brightly as Kyle subjugated Stan's willpower. His bottom lip quivered as he spoke.

"Forget everything you saw or heard tonight," Kyle said in a voice hardly above a whisper. "Get back in your car and drive until morning." He paused. "And don't come looking for me again."

He released Stan from his grasp and stumbled backwards, into Cartman's chest, as Stan wordlessly got into his car and pulled away into the endless void of forest.

Cartman's hands tightly gripped Kyle's heaving shoulders from behind and the two of them watched Stan's tail lights disappear into the darkness.

The Horror of Our Love

Outside of the motel, Cartman overhand chucked Stan's second GPS tracker across the parking lot. He had scoured the rest of his truck until he had finally found it stuck up underneath the cab. He was furious with Stan for following them and for holding him at gunpoint. He was also furious at himself for failing to find it in the first place.

Kyle, on the other hand, was losing his mind inside the room.

When Cartman went back inside, shutting and locking the door behind him, Kyle was pacing the room, eyes wild and wet, muttering into his hands. He looked over as Cartman entered, glancing him up and down, chest rising and falling with heavy breaths. Cartman watched him pensively, leaning up against the door.

"I got rid of it," he said.

Kyle nodded, rubbing his eyes with his palms. "Okay," he managed, his voice tremulous and strained.

"What do you want to do now?"

Kyle shook his head. "I don't fucking know, Cartman." He took in a deep, shuddering breath. "How could he do this? How could he fucking do this? After everything we've been through, how could he just *turn* on me like that?"

"Hey, you're not the one he was pointing the gun at in the first place, at least," Cartman said. "Maybe you should try chilling out a little bit."

Kyle glared at him. "You don't understand!" he exclaimed. "My family thinks I'm dead, my best friend hates me, and I want to kill people *all the time*! You can't understand how that feels!"

"You really think I don't understand?" Cartman asked, frowning, his voice rising. "You don't think *I* understand what it's like to think about killing people all the time? You don't think that I've been trying to block that shit out for years?! I *get it*, Kyle! And Stan hates me too! Arguably, more than he hates you! Kenny doesn't know where the fuck I am! I told my mom she was dead to me and then fucked off to Seattle with *you* so *maybe* I fucking get it!"

"It's not the same!" Kyle shouted. "You have a choice! You don't have to be here! You could go back to South Park like nothing happened!"

"No, I fucking can't! I don't have a choice, Kyle!" Cartman yelled, his voice gruff and booming.

Kyle sputtered incredulously. "Yes, you do! You don't have to stay here! Why are you protecting me!? What could you *possibly* get out of this!?"

"Oh my *fucking* god, Kyle! *This* is what I get out of it! You!" Cartman shouted, gesturing towards Kyle. His face was quickly becoming very red but he was on a tirade now and couldn't stop. He ran his hands through his hair and shook his head as he paced around the room. "You being all psycho and unhinged! You lying in bed with me, you sleeping in the backseat of my car! It's *you*! It's all for you! Don't you fucking get it?"

Every breath that Kyle had ever held felt like it had been sucked from his lungs right then in that moment. His mouth hung slightly open as he tried to process what Cartman had just admitted to him. Under normal circumstances, Kyle would have tried to talk about it with him to try to figure things out like feelings and emotions. But these were not normal circumstances. In fact, the amount of adrenaline rushing through his veins then might have been lethal if he wasn't already undead and everything that he had been thinking or feeling and trying to suppress over the past few weeks or months or years however long he had hidden them away came coursing to the surface, crashing over him like a wave. He was at the mercy of his heightened vampire passion and had no other choice but to spring forward and push Cartman up against the wall with a loud crash.

Cartman oofed and looked down at Kyle, who was holding fast to the collar of his shirt, searching his face with anxious, stormy eyes for any sort of clue for what was about to happen. Kyle stared back up at him, eyebrows knitted close together, breathing quickly and heavily, almost panting.

Then, without much of a warning, Kyle pulled Cartman down into a deep and desperate, bruising kiss. Cartman exhaled into it and then brought his hands up to cup Kyle's face, pulling him in closer, slipping his tongue between his lips. He tasted like blood and spit but, to him, it was almost ambrosial.

Up until that moment, everything had felt like it had been falling apart around them, and even then, it still was, but everything seemed to stop for a moment as Kyle kissed Cartman like they were the only two people left in the world and Cartman reciprocated like Kyle was his whole universe.

After a few seconds of this, Kyle pulled back a bit, looking up at Cartman with luminous, green eyes so bright and brilliant it was almost like Cartman was staring into the sun.

"I don't know why I just did that," Kyle gasped, his cheeks pinkening significantly.

Cartman licked his lips ravenously. "Do it again," he panted.

Kyle breathed out a laugh and met his lips again, somewhat gentler this time, but just as eager, letting out a soft groan against Cartman's mouth.

Cartman's hands found their way from Kyle's jaw to his shoulders and then down his back until he was holding him steadfast by the hips. They were sharp and bony and Cartman's fingers slipped up under his shirt slightly to trace their shape, following the arc of them around to his ass, squeezing firmly with both large hands, eliciting an obscene moan from Kyle.

"Oh, fuck," Cartman muttered, gripping upwards, sweeping Kyle off his feet, carrying him over to the bed where he dropped him unceremoniously. He fell backward onto his back on the mattress, propping himself on his elbows and watching from under long eyelashes as Cartman knelt in front of him with a lustful expression.

Cartman sat down on the bed with his back against the headboard and, in a fraction of a second, Kyle was there in his lap, kissing him, his fingers clutching at Cartman's strong jawline, ghosting along the beginnings of stubble there, then sliding up the back of his neck, up into his soft, brown hair.

"Why didn't you tell me this sooner?" he asked in a hoarse whisper against his lips, kissing downward, across his chin and lower to his Adam's apple, his tongue darting out onto the salty skin.

Cartman chuckled nervously, the laugh turning into a moan in his throat as Kyle kissed a bruise into him. "Obviously, I didn't think you were into me," he gulped.

"Stupid ass," Kyle murmured, kissing along the vein in Cartman's neck, his mouth watering a little as he felt the pulse against his lips. His teeth grazed gently along his skin and Cartman let out a desperate, high-pitched whine.

"Oh, bite me," he groaned.

Kyle froze for a second. "You like it? You want me to?" he asked, genuinely a little surprised at the notion. "I thought you wanted me to stop."

Cartman nodded briskly, tilting his head to the side a little so that Kyle could find room for his mouth. With one hand, he shoved Kyle's shirt upwards, feeling at the cool skin of his back. The other dug into the denim of Kyle's pants with his fingernails, urging him closer. "Y-yeah, I- *ah*- thought I might snap and kiss you so I f-figured it'd be safer to stop. And- *nnggh*-plus, I thought m-maybe you were going to end up k-killing me," he managed, struggling to form a coherent sentence while Kyle was nuzzling at the crook of his neck with his nose, dragging his lips along his skin.

"Well, I eat better these days," Kyle mused, pausing to lap at his throat. "So, I think me murdering you is off the table. For now."

"Do it, then," said Cartman, his voice quavering hopelessly.

"If you insist," Kyle sighed into his neck. He pressed a wet kiss against the purple, palpating vein under his skin but, soon, his lips curled back and he sunk his teeth in, hard, drawing blood immediately, groaning into it as Cartman let out a needy moan, bunching up his fist in Kyle's hair, holding him there, firmly.

Kyle wasn't really hungry but Cartman's blood tasted better than anything else in the world so he drank a bit, savoring the taste on his palate. Shortly, though, he pulled back a bit, drawing out his teeth and choosing, instead, to kiss and lick at the wound, tracing patterns in the blood with his tongue. Sitting up, then, he brought their lips together again, allowing Cartman to taste his own blood through the kiss.

Cartman thrust his hips upward as Kyle breathed out against his mouth and Kyle could feel the unmistakable outline of his cock, stiff and aching in his pants. Kyle glanced downwards with wide, neon eyes and bit down hard on his own lower lip, breath hitching in his throat as he pressed down against him from above. Cartman blushed profusely and looked away, embarrassed, dragging his hands down Kyle's back until he was holding him at the hips again.

"Oh, so you *really* like it when I bite you, huh?" Kyle asked, his voice lower and rougher than he felt like it had ever been before.

"Shut up about it," Cartman hissed. He looked up, briefly, his dichromatic eyes blazing from under his dark eyelashes. "You've got vampire powers and I'm just some regular-ass faggot. I'm defenseless against your diabolic wiles."

Kyle rolled his eyes. "Diabolic wiles," he repeated, sarcastically. "Don't be stupid."

"You make me stupid," Cartman countered. "I can hardly think around you." He leaned forward and kissed across his face until his hot breath was right up against Kyle's ear, tonguing at his earlobe. "I'm helpless against your vampire Jew magic."

"You've got a thing for Jews, then, too, huh?" Kyle teased, trying to ignore the goosebumps that sprung up on his arms as Cartman exhaled against his ear. "Or am I the exception?"

"You're the exception to everything, you asshole," Cartman growled, rutting up against him again. He grabbed him hard by the hair again and pulled him back into another deep kiss.

Kyle laughed against his mouth, almost in disbelief of what was happening. "You make me feel like I'm insane," he murmured.

"Maybe you are," Cartman panted, gripping him firmly by the back of the neck.

Kyle nodded wordlessly, shuddering under Cartman's touch. He was hard himself, by then, and he urged his body downwards, desperate for friction.

Cartman let out a small, strangled cry as their cocks met through denim, then he grabbed Kyle by the hip once again and flipped him onto his side, leaning down on top of him, holding himself up on his hands, kissing him roughly. Kyle whimpered as Cartman pinned him to the mattress and he jerked his hips up against him. He breathed a laugh as Cartman groaned into his shoulder.

Kyle reached down and fumbled with the fly of Cartman's jeans. Cartman looked down, wide-eyed, and licked his lips.

"You.... You really wanna do this?" Cartman asked, a little astonished, watching intently.

Kyle nodded quickly, his chest heaving with frantic, heavy breaths. "Yeah," he said. He was almost embarrassed at just how badly he wanted it. He blamed it on vampirism and the way it made his body feel like it was on fire, all nerve endings and synapses firing off in rapid succession.

He didn't know how to feel about this, any of this. Before this past month he had never even considered the idea that he would ever be in a hotel room making out with Eric Cartman. But, this wasn't the Eric Cartman he had grown up with. Not anymore, he didn't think. This wasn't the Eric Cartman that made his life a living hell throughout their childhood and fought him on everything and took joy in tormenting others.

This was the Eric Cartman that let him survive off his blood and asked nothing in return.

This was the Eric Cartman that stole blood bags from the hospital for him.

This was the Eric Cartman that spent his dead father's inheritance on keeping him safe.

This was the Eric Cartman that drove him to Denver and Seattle and held him while he was having a breakdown.

This was the Eric Cartman who left prom to talk to him and hid him in his attic and disposed of bodies for him. This Cartman was different and Kyle burned for him.

He finally worked the button of Cartman's jeans free and shoved his hands inside, gracelessly palming his erection through his underwear, feeling it twitch beneath his fingers as he did. Cartman gave a loud, choked off moan and his elbows buckled, almost giving out under him.

"Jesus Christ," he panted. He leaned back a little to pull his pants the rest of the way down to his knees as he hovered over top of Kyle, watching as his fingers danced along the tent in his boxers.

Kyle glanced up at him, the ghost of a smirk playing on his lips. "I've barely even touched you."

Cartman exhaled sharply. "You don't get it, do you?" He shook his head. "I've wanted you to do this forever. Like, holy shit, all through high school I wanted you like this."

Kyle opened his mouth to say something but quickly shut it, feeling a little speechless. "Dude," he finally managed to mutter under his breath.

Cartman turned his head away, his cheeks bright red again. "Don't act like you're surprised."

Kyle swallowed. "I'm a little surprised." He pressed his thumb down onto the wet spot on Cartman's boxers, breathing a laugh as he elicited a short gasp. He glanced up at Cartman who stared down at him with a dreamy, pensive look for a moment before closing the gap and pressing their lips together again. They kissed until they ran out of air and paused for a breath before kissing again, Kyle fondling Cartman through flannel fabric and pressing his hips upwards to make contact with Cartman's thigh through his pants. Cartman's body temperature was a normal 98.6 but, to Kyle he was incredibly warm, almost as though he radiated heat against his cold body.

As they kissed, Cartman pushed up Kyle's shirt until he had shrugged it off completely, clutching at the smooth skin of his chest, and then he sat back and undid Kyle's fly with ease, making Kyle feel stupid for fumbling with it so much. Cartman slipped his hand in, then,

foregoing Kyle's boxers completely and wrapping his hand around his bare cock. Kyle let out a hiss of surprise that slowly melted into a hungry whimper and he bucked up into his hand, panting against his lips.

"Oh, fuck yeah," Cartman purred hotly in Kyle's ear, stroking briskly as he writhed beneath him. He pulled his hand back for a second and spit into it, returning it to Kyle's cock with warm wetness. Again, suddenly, he flipped Kyle onto his side so that they were spooning, Kyle facing away from him, still jerking him off roughly.

"Dammit, Cartman," Kyle lamented, reaching back to try and touch him again, frowning when he couldn't reach. Never in his life had he been this turned on nor this desperate to make someone else feel good. He wanted to reciprocate and jerk Cartman off just as fast and hard. He wanted his cock in his mouth. He was also surprised at the ease at which Cartman had been tossing him around tonight. Being a vampire with limitless power and all, he figured he'd be more inclined to put up a struggle to assert dominance against him. He didn't, though, instead letting Cartman take the lead, wondering what he would decide to do next.

"Relax, Jew," Cartman breathed and he thrust his hips forward so that Kyle could feel his hard length against him. With his free hand, he tugged down Kyle's pants, cupping his ass and squeezing hard. "God, your ass is fucking perfect."

"Hah," Kyle panted and he buried his face into the pillow to stifle the moan that escaped his lips as Cartman paused grinding against him to suck on his finger lewdly and then press it up against his entrance. There was a dull burn as his finger pushed into him but Kyle found his pain tolerance to be through the roof ever since he'd been turned into a vampire so it didn't bother him at all. Instead, he rocked back into it.

Cartman kissed the back of Kyle's neck, kneading into him with gentle pressure. "You like that, huh?" he asked, his voice low and brusque.

Kyle nodded. "Yeah," he said. "Don't you dare stop."

Cartman hummed contentedly and shifted slightly and, then, Kyle felt Cartman's bare cock slap against the cleft of his ass and he inhaled sharply, surprised at the sensation. Cartman groaned softly into Kyle's shoulder as he rubbed himself slowly across the smooth skin there, slick with precum. He removed his index finger from Kyle's ass for a second to spit into his hand again and stroked his cock quickly for a moment, then Kyle's again, as well, eliciting a breathy moan.

Kyle decided, then, that he needed more. He reached back, straining his shoulder, getting Cartman's cock his grasp and maneuvering it so it was right up against his asshole, pressing it into himself slightly.

Cartman stiffened and gasped. "Kyle," he stammered, his legs trembling as he tried to hold back from pushing into him more, "what are you doing?"

Kyle shot him a smoldering look over his shoulder. "Are you going to fuck me or what?"

Cartman swallowed. "Y-yeah," he said. He gripped Kyle tightly by the waist and slowly thrust forward into him, down to the hilt of his cock, exhaling hot breath against the nape of Kyle's neck. He was tight and there wasn't any lubrication other than saliva but Kyle didn't care one way or another, he just wanted more.

Cartman started into an even pace, his hips colliding with Kyle's ass with every thrust, his hand finding Kyle's weeping cock again and stroking rapidly, Kyle calling out softly every time their bodies met. Cartman groaned loudly into Kyle's hair as he fucked him, then, kissed gently down his neck and shoulder, lips grazing along the pale, freckled skin.

"God, you're so hot," Cartman murmured. He ghosted along the skin of his neck with his tongue, latching on with his mouth and sucking a deep purple hickey into him, the irony of sucking on a vampire's neck eluding him.

Kyle answered with a voracious whine. He was already getting close to orgasm and put his hand on top of Cartman's on his cock, urging him to slow down. Cartman, ever rebellious, responded by picking up the speed.

"S-stop, you're gonna make me cum," Kyle said, his fingernails digging into Cartman's wrist. He didn't want to finish yet. He wanted to do this for the rest of forever.

"I wanna make you cum," Cartman countered, seemingly even more turned on, his tongue running along the rim of Kyle's ear. He kept his pace, though, fucking him steadily.

Kyle shuddered and screwed his eyes shut, his hips bucking upwards, involuntarily, and then pressing back onto Cartman's cock.

Cartman let out a deep groan, pushing deeper inside him. "*Oh*, baby," he said, his voice catching in his throat. Kyle realized, then, how close he was as well by how he was shaking and trembling, his thrusts beginning to falter.

"You're gonna cum too, huh?" Kyle asked, his voice quavering with want and need.

Cartman could only answer with a whimper, burying his face in the crook of Kyle's neck, gradually fucking him faster and faster, breathing warmth against Kyle's skin.

Kyle turned slightly, hooking his leg up over Cartman's knees, bringing a hand up to run through Cartman's pretty hair, tugging lightly but mostly just holding on as he pounded into him. He knew he wouldn't be able to last more than a few more seconds, especially with Cartman's large hand on his cock.

"Oh my god, Cartman," he groaned, tossing his head back as he started to cum, bucking his hips forward, spilling onto his stomach and the bed sheets with a whimpering cry.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck," Cartman panted as he came shortly afterwards, filling Kyle with his pent up heat, moaning into his curly red hair.

Then, the two of them lay in silence for a minute, covered in sweat and cum, with nothing but the sound of their own heavy breathing to accompany them.

Kyle blinked. "Wow," he said aloud, finally, his voice hoarse. He cleared his throat.

"Yeah," Cartman said. With a soft grunt, he pulled out and Kyle could feel the warmth seeping out of him as he lay still on the mattress.

Kyle rolled over onto his back and Cartman did the same, both of them laying next to each other, staring up at the popcorn ceiling in post-orgasmic haze, half naked, still catching their breath, and trying to come to grips with the lascivious acts they had just partaken in. Kyle licked his lips and Cartman swallowed thickly.

"That was, um..." Kyle started but trailed off.

"Yeah," Cartman said again.

All they had to do, though, was glance over at the other before they were kissing again, attacking each other's mouths, Cartman's tongue against Kyle's lips, forcing entry. Then, Cartman's lips were on Kyle's neck, kissing the scar that had gotten them into this mess in the first place and Kyle found his cock jolting to life once again, still dribbling cum from before. He sucked in a breath that sounded a lot like a hiss and pushed Cartman away, abruptly.

"I need to take a shower," he said, sitting up, his hair a mess, sticking up every which way.

Cartman jumped to his feet, pulling his pants up with one hand and knocking Kyle back onto the mattress, moving quite quick for a guy his size. "Not if I take one first!" he shouted, bolting for the bathroom and shutting the door.

"Asshole!" Kyle shouted and frowned as he heard the pattering of the shower and he sat up on the bed again. Not to be deterred, he stripped himself of the rest of his clothes, cleaned himself off with tissues the best he could to move across the room, and marched himself into the bathroom.

"Move over," he commanded, slipping in through the shower curtain. He pressed his hands up against Cartman's wet, naked back, shifting him aside.

"Ex-fucking-scuse you," Cartman said but moved over without protest, making room for Kyle under the spray of the shower head.

Kyle made a contented sound as the hot water hit him and he cast his eyes quickly over to Cartman who was watching him with a serious expression.

"What?"

"Nothing," Cartman said, his Adam's apple bobbing in his throat as he swallowed.

Cartman was a mountain of a person. A currently very naked person. And the two of them were close enough now that Kyle could feel Cartman's dick twitch against him. Kyle glanced up at him with a faint wry smirk and Cartman looked down at him, blinking water out of his eyes.

Without a word, Kyle began to jerk him off again, keeping eye contact as he did so. He bit down on his bottom lip, amused, as Cartman's eyes fell closed and he let out the most satisfying whimper. Kyle breathed a laugh that turned into a gasp of surprise as Cartman suddenly swept his legs out from under him again, holding him up against the shower wall by his hips, Kyle's legs wrapping around his waist, and he kissed him, water running down their faces.

It was Kyle's turn, then, to let out an embarrassing whine as Cartman slipped his cock into his ass again, fucking him up against the wall. Once again, neither of them lasted very long, only a few deep thrusts, before they were both cumming a second time, panting against each other's lips.

They rinsed and dried off and Cartman followed Kyle out of the bathroom, pulling on a fresh pair of boxers and sitting down on the bed as he watched Kyle dress in clean sweatpants and a t-shirt.

"You know," Cartman said, laying back on the pillows, "how I kept saying you owed me a favor? For drinking my blood?"

"Yeah," Kyle said, glancing at him out of the corner of his eye as he toweled off his hair and sat down on the corner of the desk to put on a clean pair of socks.

Cartman laughed. "Well, the whole time I just wanted to ask you to suck my dick."

Kyle snorted. "You really wanted *me* with my *razor sharp fangs* near your dick?" he snickered.

"It was a risk I was willing to take," Cartman said. He licked his lips. "Might still be."

Kyle rolled his eyes. "What makes you think you didn't just use up your favor?"

"Oh, please. You probably owe me *another* favor for making you cum like that," Cartman said.

"Hah!" Kyle barked. "I haven't done anything that you haven't been super into in the first place, Mr. I-Like-It-When-You-Bite-Me."

Cartman's cheeks pinked up slightly. "Shut up," he said. "I'm going to sleep." He tossed the covers over his lap and sunk down into the pillows.

Kyle watched him for a second. "You wanna talk about this?" he asked.

"Nope."

"Okay, good, me either."

Cartman flicked off the light next to the bed. "Are you staying up?"

Kyle nodded. "Yeah, I'm gonna... read or something."

"Whatever," Cartman said. "G'night, Jew."

"G'night, Cartman."

It wasn't long before Cartman's breathing evened out and he began to snore softly. Kyle had taken out a paperback novel but had yet to open it. Instead, he sat in the lamplight, staring off at nothing for the most part, occasionally glancing over at Cartman sleeping in the queen-sized bed, watching the rise and fall of his chest under the comforter.

He felt like, after all that, he should be worn out. He felt like he should have been able to relax. The tension in his shoulders, however, wouldn't seem to subside. So, quietly, he stood, slipped on his shoes and threw a hoodie on over his shirt. He shot one last lingering look at Cartman as he slept, and then slipped out the door into the night.

Don't Threaten Me With a Good Time

Kyle wasn't sure what he was doing out in the city in the middle of the night but he had a couple of hours until dawn and he was taking it all in. He was so full of anxious vampire energy that he needed to be out, exploring the city, using his superhuman dexterity to make it to the rooftops. He was testing his limits and pushing himself, scaling brick walls and climbing fire escapes.

He felt bad for having sex with Cartman and then immediately bolting but there wasn't much else he could think to do, right then. He was overwhelmed. His senses were overloaded by the sheer amount he was feeling all at once. There was passion and excitement and fear and grief and anxiety and rage and elation. It was too much and he didn't know what to do. So, he ran. He ran through the city and jumped from rooftop to rooftop like he was in a goddamn Spider-man movie.

Eventually, he found himself on top of a tall apartment building, looking out over the glittering Seattle skyline. Seattle was beautiful at night. From up there he could see the Space Needle glowing through the city haze like a rocket to one direction and the looming, white peak of Mt. Rainier in the dark to another. He could see the never-ending forests and the deep waters of Puget Sound. It seemed like Seattle had a little bit of everything and it made him miss home. Not that he had a home anymore, really.

He looked down from the top of the building he was currently perched on, leaning over the cement wall with both hands, staring down at the staggering heights. He took the opportunity to catch his breath, only then realizing that he was shaking.

"Oh my god," he muttered into the air.

He swung his legs over the side and sat on the parapet, taking in a deep breath and exhaling loudly. It had been a long night. He had killed a man, had a run in with Stan, and had intense, spur of the moment sex with Eric Cartman. Twice. And, it was only four in the morning. The last few hours seemed to drag on like days. He had certainly experienced enough to last a lifetime recently and he needed a break.

He really didn't know what to do. He took his phone out of his hoodie pocket, staring at the screen in the dark. He scrolled through the contacts. They were only the ones he had known from memory or had been able to steal from Cartman's phone. His mom, Kenny, Stan... Not that he would need them anyways. It almost pained him to see them there. He was one tap away from his mother's voice and his old life and South Park.

He stared for far too long, his thumb hovering over the screen, daring himself to tap on a name. He was almost about to pick someone from the list and call but his phone suddenly lit up and buzzed loudly in his hand before he could.

It was Cartman.

Hesitantly, Kyle answered.

"Where the hell are you?" Cartman immediately accosted into the phone.

"I don't know," Kyle admitted. "Some rooftop somewhere."

"Why!?"

"I don't know!"

Cartman was quiet for a minute. *"Is it because of me?"*

"No," Kyle said, quickly. "It's not you. It's everything."

"Everything... Like, including the fact that I just railed you in a hotel room?" asked Cartman.

Kyle stammered dumbly for a moment. "Well, I *guess* so! Everything is just a lot right now..." He pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed. "Look, I'll be back before the sun comes up, I just need some time to think."

"Think about what?"

"You ask too many questions," Kyle said, shaking his head and rubbing the bridge of his nose.

"Well, you fucked me and then left in the middle of the night so I feel like maybe you've got some shit on your mind," Cartman grumbled from his end of the line.

Kyle sighed. He was right. "Cartman, listen, what happened tonight... that was... I mean... Shit." He wasn't sure what he wanted to say or how to say it.

"Kyle, I get it," Cartman said, sounding a little defeated.

"You get what, exactly?" asked Kyle.

"It was just sex. It doesn't mean anything."

"No!" Kyle exclaimed. Then he sighed again. "What... What do you even want out of this?"

Cartman was quiet again. *"I don't know,"* he said, finally.

"Me either," said Kyle. He kicked his legs, dangling over the alleyway beneath him. "It means something, I just... I don't know what it means."

"It means I like you."

For some reason, the words made Kyle's heart throb in his chest. "Y-yeah. I know. I like you too."

He heard Cartman suck in a sharp breath. *"Sweet,"* he murmured and Kyle had to exhale a laugh into the night.

"How long have-"

"A while," Cartman said, cutting him off mid-sentence, guessing what he was going to ask.

Kyle nodded to himself. He swallowed. "Okay. You never.. You never said anything."

"Duh. What kind of idiot talks about their feelings? I'm not Marsh," Cartman said. The mention of Stan made Kyle's chest sting.

Cartman continued. *"I think I've liked you since, like... Well... I honestly don't know. It's been... just... Yeah. A while."*

"A while like months or a while like-"

"Years. Yeah."

"Dude."

Cartman laughed. *"Pretty pathetic, huh? Closeted pining loser pathetic,"* he said.

"N-No. I just... Wow. I never suspected anything," said Kyle.

"Because you're oblivious as shit, Kyle," Cartman said. *"I swear half the school figured it out before we fucked off out of South Park. Kenny for sure did. Stan... I mean... If he thought we were fucking, he probably realized it too."*

"Damn," said Kyle. "Stan really did call it, then, when he called me out and went all psycho."

"Ch'yeah," Cartman scoffed. *"I was afraid you were gonna call me out next. But you didn't. Because you're oblivious."*

"I'm not *that* oblivious."

"Kyle, I had to practically spell it out for you! How many times did you have to ask 'Why are you doing this for me?' before it clicked? I cuddled with you, for Christ's sake! I swear I had a boner every time you drank my blood."

"Jesus Christ," said Kyle, shaking his head. "Am I really that oblivious?"

"Yeah, dude."

"Huh." He wondered what else he had missed.

"What... are we gonna do now?" Cartman asked.

Kyle swallowed. Cartman had never asked this before. He had always seemed so sure of what they should do next but now he was looking to Kyle for answers. Answers that Kyle didn't have.

"I don't know, Cartman," he said and his voice sounded very small.

"Okay," Cartman said. *"What are we?"*

"Stop asking questions that I don't have the answer to," said Kyle. "We... We're friends. We're friends who live together and sleep in the same bed and have sex with each other..." This was sounding an awful lot like something other than friends but he ignored it.

"So, boyfriends," observed Cartman.

"No, not boyfriends. I'm not... I don't think we..." Kyle let out a long, hefty sigh. "I'm dead, Cartman. What we're doing works for now but... I'm not going to age. I'm going to keep having to kill over and over like every week and we're eventually going to get caught and I don't want... I don't want you to..." He trailed off when he found himself getting emotional about it. This was a conversation for in person, not over the phone. And not directly after sleeping together. "We'll talk later. I just don't... I don't want you to get hurt."

Cartman didn't say anything for a while but Kyle could hear his breathing on the other end of the line. *"Okay,"* he said, finally. Kyle wished he could read what emotion he was experiencing through the phone but he couldn't. It bothered him.

"Do you want to do it again?" Cartman asked, speaking up again.

"Yeah," Kyle said, hoping he didn't sound too eager. He wanted to do that again every day for the rest of his never-ending life, if he could. It was addicting. *Cartman* was addicting. His blood, his mouth, his cock... He wanted all of it all the time.

"Me too," Cartman said. *"Obviously."*

Kyle gulped. There was a smooth kind of growl to his voice that sent shivers down his spine. "Okay," he said.

"You should come back to the hotel. I'm lonely," Cartman said, suddenly.

Kyle scoffed. "Go back to sleep."

"But Kyyyyyle, I can't sleep," Cartman whined.

"I'll be... I'll be back soon," Kyle promised.

Cartman sighed. *"Do you even know how to get back?"*

"I'll GPS it."

"You're gonna get lost."

"I will not get lost."

"You're totally gonna get lost."

"I will not! I have... What did you say earlier? Supernatural vampire sense of direction or something?" Kyle pondered.

"Yeah, but you told me that was pigeons."

Kyle had to laugh a little. "Sure. But listen, like I said, I'll be back before the sun comes up. I just need to do... some soul searching or something."

"Sounds gay," Cartman said.

"You sound gay," Kyle countered.

Cartman snickered. *"Yeah, okay,"* he said. *"I'll see you in a little bit, then?"*

"Yeah," said Kyle. "I'll see you soon."

He hung up and stared at his phone, the screen still bright and lit up in the dark. He squinted at it and locked the screen, sticking it in his hoodie pocket. He sat there on the ledge for a while, thinking and taking in the night. From up there, the city smelled like smog and detritus and seawater and the lights looked like a million glittering diamonds. There was so much on his mind to think about but, mostly, as usual, he thought about Cartman.

He thought about the taste of his lips and how he had begged to be bitten and the feeling of his cock inside him. He shuddered. That was something he could get used to. He didn't think he should, though. There were a thousand reasons why but, mostly, things felt more complicated now, if that were even possible. It gave him a headache.

So, he stood up on the parapet, feeling kind of like a superhero. In fact, he kind of was. He took a deep breath and jumped. It was a swift, few story fall and he landed on his feet, hunching down and steadying himself with his hand as he touched down on the ground. When he stood again, his feet tingled and ached a little but he was otherwise fine. Being a vampire had some really cool perks.

He pulled his phone back from his pocket again, bringing up Google Maps, using the GPS to find his way back to the motel. Like Cartman had thought, however, he did get lost, if only briefly. The sky was just starting to turn from black to pre-dawn blue when he arrived.

He used his key card to unlock the door, turning as soon as he entered, to lock it again behind him. The lights were dim and he figured Cartman had to be back asleep by then. He was mistaken, though, because Cartman came up out of nowhere and towered before him. Without a word, he pushed Kyle up against the door and gripped him firmly by the jaw, leaning down to kiss him ardently.

Kyle pressed himself back into the kiss, almost melting against Cartman's warm, wide chest as he did, his hands running up his forearms to his biceps. After being out in the night, and coming back to the motel to Cartman doing this, it felt an awful lot like coming home.

His eyes fell closed and he pulled his hoodie off over his head, leaving himself in just his t-shirt. Cartman was already pushing his hands up under the shirt, feeling at Kyle's chest and back, running his hands over any skin he could. Then, the shirt was off, tossed across the floor somewhere and Cartman bent down to kiss at Kyle's neck.

"Have you been just sitting here waiting for me to come back all night?" Kyle asked, lifting up Cartman's shirt next.

"No," Cartman mumbled into the crook of Kyle's neck. "I went to a convenience store, too."

"Oh yeah? To buy what?" asked Kyle.

Cartman tore his lips away from Kyle's body and turned around for a second, grabbing a plastic grocery bag off of the bedside. He tossed it to Kyle.

Kyle opened it. There were a couple of packs of snacks, a few candy bars, a can of Pepsi, and a bottle of lube. Kyle took out the latter and held it up with a smirk.

"Do you have plans or something?" he asked, quirked an eyebrow.

"Well, you know, I just thought maybe it would be good to have some around since you're such a slut for dick or whatever," Cartman said, nonchalantly, with a shrug.

Kyle scoffed. "I am *not* a slut."

"Oh, come on," Cartman said. "You're totally a slut." He stepped closer until Kyle was right in front of him again. "A slut for *me*."

"You fucking wish," Kyle said with an eye roll.

"Maybe I do," said Cartman. He grabbed Kyle by the waist, pulling him close to him.

Then, they were kissing again, with Kyle bringing his arms up to wrap around Cartman's neck, tangling his fingers up in his hair. Kyle exhaled into the kiss.

"You know, maybe *you're* the slut," Kyle taunted against Cartman's lips. "You could be. If you want to be."

"*Oh, shit*," Cartman muttered and Kyle felt his cock twitch against him.

Kyle gave a wry grin. This was interesting. He hummed, kissing along Cartman's collarbone and then up his neck to his ear. "Do you want me to fuck you?"

Cartman answered with a desperate whimper and he gripped harder at Kyle's hips.

Kyle breathed a laugh, hot and humid against Cartman's ear, giving him goosebumps. "Yeah?" he whispered. "You want me to fuck you?"

He turned quickly and pushed Cartman down onto his back on the bed. Cartman gripped at the sheets with his fists and watched hungrily as Kyle stood in front of him and opened the packaging on the lube. He seemed a little surprised at the initiative Kyle was showing here but, then again, he *was* a vampire with limitless power. He was bound to top eventually.

Kyle finally finished unwrapping the lube and set it aside as he took off his sweatpants. He leaned back down on the bed, kneeling beside Cartman, kissing him again as he pulled his boxers down. Then, he flipped him onto his front so that he was bent over the side of the bed. Cartman was a big guy and he wasn't used to being thrown around like this. Especially as effortlessly as Kyle made it seem. Cartman was tall. He was big. He was expected to top. In

every sexual relationship he had been in before then, he had been expected to top. But, the way Kyle was treating him then, lithe, wiry *Kyle* of all people, did things to his insides that he didn't think possible.

"Have you ever done this before?" Kyle asked, popping open the tube of lube, squeezing some out onto his fingers. He pulled the waistline of his sweatpants down, letting his hard cock out. He drew in a breath as he stroked it with cool slickness. He felt bad not prepping Cartman at all but his fingernails were essentially claws and that was a pretty terrible idea in essence.

Cartman shook his head. "No," he exhaled into the mattress. "To myself, yeah, but nobody's-" he started but cut himself off with a fervent whine as Kyle pressed the head of his cock up against his entrance. "Oh, Christ, fuck me."

Kyle placed his hands on Cartman's ample hips and pushed into him with a low groan, his cock swallowed up by his velvety heat. Cartman whimpered in response and sucked in a sharp breath, tensing immediately and then relaxing.

"Is that good?" Kyle asked as he started into a slow, steady rhythm.

Cartman nodded, panting. "Yeah. Fuck."

Kyle dug his fingernails into the soft skin at Cartman's waist and then brought his hands down to spread him open a bit more to watch himself thrust in and out of him for a minute. It was entrancing and felt almost too good. He had never fucked *anyone* before, really. This was all new to him as well and it was overwhelming. He let out a shaky exhale and leaned forward onto his hands, bunching up his fists in the bedspread.

Cartman gave a groan and pushed back onto him and Kyle made a wolfish snarling sound in his throat, grinding his hips up against his ass. At the sound and friction, Cartman whimpered and his cock throbbed almost painfully as he thrust forward against the bed, precum making a silvery wet spot on the sheets beneath him.

"Oh, Christ," he moaned. "I didn't think you were going to feel this good but holy shit."

"You're too much," Kyle growled, shaking his head as he pounded into him. "You're always so fucking much." His voice quavered and he knew he was already dangerously close to the edge. As a vampire he could *feel* so much more than he could as a human. His nerve endings were all electric and live wires.

Despite knowing how close he was, really, his orgasm seemed to come out of nowhere and hit him like a freight train to the gut, his eyes screwed tightly shut and his body tensed and he let out a loud, hissing cry, his fingernails tearing holes in the bedspread as he dug into it with his hands. He immediately relaxed a bit, panting.

Cartman seemed surprised. "Did you just...?"

"... Yeah."

Then, Cartman laughed. He giggled into the mattress, his body shaking. "Vampires have *no* endurance, huh? You fucking virgin, you-"

Kyle cut him off by pulling out abruptly and flipping Cartman over onto his back, almost effortlessly. He scowled down at him and Cartman nervously laughed up at him, his cheeks flushing, and he scooted back onto the bed, against the pillows.

"You're not done yet," Kyle said in a low growl, getting up onto the bed on his knees.

Cartman gulped.

Kyle got between Cartman's legs again, pulling them apart and holding him by the soft thighs. He lined himself up and pushed into him again, still hard. Cartman arched his back a little, letting out a quiet whimper that turned into a moan of satisfaction.

"Okay, so maybe you have a little bit of endurance," Cartman said. He liked this new position. From here, he could watch Kyle fucking him. He could watch his face, all fangs and glowing eyes. God, he was hot, he thought.

Kyle pushed deeply into him, rolling his hips and hitting the perfect place that had Cartman almost seeing stars.

As if that wasn't enough, Kyle leaned down then and kissed him hard, slipping his tongue between his lips. Then, he moved downward, ghosting his lips along the delicate skin of his throat, pausing every few centimeters to press a kiss into him before, finally, finding just the right spot and sinking his sharp teeth into him.

Cartman tossed his head back and groaned, tilting his head to the side to give Kyle a better angle at his neck. He thrust his hips upwards, using Kyle's cool, taut stomach as friction for his cock.

Kyle pulled back, crimson staining his pointed canines. He licked the blood from his lips.

"I know you like that," he said.

"I know you do too," said Cartman.

Kyle smirked, letting out a quick breath, and kissed him again, smearing his own blood on his lips as he did. Cartman brought both big hands up to squeeze Kyle's ass, urging him to speed up and fuck him faster. Kyle responded by reaching down and gripping his cock with slight pressure and stroking rapidly.

Cartman gave a strangled yelp at the contact, bucking his hips forward and up into Kyle's hand. "F-fuck!" he exclaimed. "That's good. Don't fucking stop."

Kyle used his free hand to grab Cartman's face and jaw, squishing his cheeks a little, and gently digging his fingernails into him. He sucked in a hissing breath from between his teeth, staring down at him with intense, green eyes, his lips curled back slightly.

It was only a minute before Cartman came onto his stomach and he did so panting and with a chorus of helpless, breathy moans. The tensing sensation around Kyle's cock when he did was unlike anything he had ever felt before and it sent him over the edge a second time as well. He came with a thick growl that turned into a sigh of relief. He collapsed onto Cartman's front, kissing him through the post-orgasmic daze, running his fingers through the mess of cum on Cartman's stomach, trailing it up to his chest.

Cartman exhaled noisily and laughed weakly. "Holy shit."

"Yeah," Kyle sighed, pulling out and flopping over onto his side. His cock made it clear that he was able to go again if he wanted to but he felt too mentally exhausted for that right now. Plus, he figured his supernatural vampire stamina would wear poor, mortal Cartman out pretty fast. So, instead, he got up to clean up. He went to the bathroom and grabbed a roll of toilet paper.

"Think fast," he said, whipping it across the room at Cartman. It hit him directly in the face.

"You son of a bitch!" Cartman yelped, laughing. He quickly jumped to his feet, barreling towards Kyle in the bathroom doorway and grabbed him around the waist. Kyle was stronger, though and easily pinned Cartman up against the door frame.

"You tried," he taunted, flashing his fangs in a grin.

"Alright, alright," Cartman huffed. "Truce."

"Okay, truce," Kyle said, letting him go. "Anyhow, I'm taking a shower and you should too."

Cartman nodded. "I figured you would, Mr. Fucking Germophobe."

"I am *not* a germophobe!"

"Okay, well, would you ever eat ass?"

Kyle paused for a moment. "...That doesn't mean I'm a germophobe."

Cartman laughed and turned on the shower. "Get in, stupid."

Kyle did and then so did Cartman and they showered together. It was domestic and mostly innocent and, when the water began to run cold, Kyle still didn't want to get out. He did, anyhow, though and the two of them got dressed and sat on the bed as the early morning sun began to filter through the curtains.

Kyle could feel the post-sex awkwardness setting in and he fought against it. "Let's sleep," he said.

"Yeah, good plan. I'm still fucking exhausted," said Cartman. He laid back on the pillows and pulled the blankets up over his stomach. He looked at Kyle. "Are you going to sleep too this time or are you going to go run around Seattle and play Spider-Man again?"

Kyle hid a smile with a scowl. "I guess I'll humor you. It's not like I can go out in the daylight anyhow." He crawled back and got under the covers as well.

Almost instinctively, they got into prime position, rolled to face each other, Kyle pressed tight to Cartman's chest with Cartman's chin resting atop his head. Cartman ran his fingers absently up and down Kyle's back and then played idly with his hair, gently twirling the fiery locks around his fingers in a way that made Kyle's heart jump in a way nothing had before. Things felt so familiar and intimate and, above all else, they felt right. And Kyle wasn't sure how to feel about that yet. All he knew was that it made warmth and intensity stir inside him and that he never wanted to let this go. The fact that he was immortal and undead impeded that, though. It was then that he considered turning Cartman into a vampire as well for the first time. That is, the first time in a serious manor. There was a lot to consider, though. For starters, they didn't even have a label for whatever strange, lascivious fling this was. It wasn't nothing. That's all he could really define it as: not nothing.

Kyle decided, however, not to worry about that then. Instead, he let himself sleep once again.

We All Go to Hell

While he slept, Kyle dreamed.

In the dream he was in the woods again, standing on that long, dark road that wound through the cool, damp temperate rainforests of the north west. The air was cold but he wasn't and fog had rolled in and curled along the ground at his feet in wisps of white. The night was quiet except for the sound of wind in the trees and Kyle walked forward, continuing down the road for what seemed forever.

Eventually, he saw a figure in the distance, standing in front of him. As he got closer, Kyle could see the person's face, illuminated in the darkness and washed out by the moonlight. It was Stan, still disheveled, still looking lost and tired in the night.

Kyle walked up to him, concerned.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

Stan furrowed his dark, bushy eyebrows and frowned, his eyes still sad, and he was quiet for a while until he finally spoke.

"Do you really think this is sustainable?"

"What?" Kyle asked. Fear welled up in his heart as he dreaded the answer.

Stan looked at him for a long time again, sad and disappointed. In the end, he didn't answer the question but he didn't have to. "You're going to kill him."

Kyle's heart sank and it felt like the breath was sucked from his lungs. "N-No," he stammered. "I wouldn't! I-"

"You know you can't control it," said Stan. He took a step forward so that he was right up in Kyle's face. "You're a monster, Kyle."

Kyle felt a lump in his throat. "I-I'm not! Stan, I... I wouldn't hurt him."

Stan tilted his head to the side a bit and gave him a sympathetic look. "Kyle... Don't you get it?" he said. "You already have."

"What are you talking about?" Kyle asked. He took a step back and he heard a dull splash as he stepped in something wet and sticky on the pavement behind him. He turned slowly, and looked down at the ground. A pool of blood glistened in the moonlight, dark and viscid beneath his shoe. He followed the blood trail with his eyes, a few feet down the road, until he realized in horror that it was flowing from Cartman's neck as he lay dead, face down on the ground before him.

Kyle's hands flew to his mouth and he let out a choked off sob. Then, he realized that his own hands were covered in the same, red blood and that it dripped from between his lips and

down his chin.

"No... No..." he muttered in shock. Quickly, he turned back to Stan only to find him dead now as well. His blood still spread slowly across the asphalt and mingled with Cartman's beneath Kyle's feet.

Then, Kyle woke up with a start, sitting straight up in bed with a gasp. His heart was racing and his chest heaved with heavy, panicked breaths. He touched at his face and looked down at his hands and was relieved to find them clean and devoid of blood. He looked around. He was still in the motel with Cartman's hot, heavy body next to him. Midday light streamed through the blinds behind the curtains in even lines across the grimy carpet.

Cartman groaned and rolled over next to him in bed as he checked the alarm clock on the nightstand. "Christ, do you fucking mind?" he asked. "I need at least six hours of sleep before you're jostling me around." He propped himself up on his arm and blinked the sleep from his eyes. His expression phased from annoyed to concerned, though, when he noticed how shaken up Kyle looked. "What? What's wrong?"

Kyle shook his head, still gulping for air, trying to shake the fear from his chest. "Nothing," he said. He cleared his throat. "I just had a fucked up dream."

Cartman frowned. "Oh. Well if *that's* all." He rolled back over to sleep again but Kyle grabbed him by the arm to stop him, first.

"No, I need you to get up," Kyle said. He wasn't going to be able to go back to sleep, himself and there was no way that he was going to be able to sit quietly in the room while Cartman slept after a nightmare like that.

Cartman groaned again. "What?! Why?"

Kyle jumped out of bed, running his hand through his tangled mess of curls, pacing back and forth. "I need to do... I need to... I don't know! I need to do *something!*"

Cartman stretched and sat up. "Don't tell me you're going to leave again."

"I'm not," Kyle said. "I can't, anyhow. Not now. Not with the sun up."

"Then what do you need to do?"

Kyle thought about it. His dream had really shaken him to his core and he wondered if, in the dream, Stan was right. Maybe he couldn't control himself. Maybe he really was a monster. Maybe, if he got angry enough and hungry enough he really *would* snap and kill Cartman. That was a terrifying, nauseating thought. He had to make it as unlikely as possible by taking all the measures he could to ensure that he was calm, rational, and well fed.

"I need to kill somebody," he said, finally.

"Whoa, what? Like right now? Already?" Cartman asked, swinging his legs over the side of the bed and studying his expression, curiously.

"No," said Kyle. "But soon. I'm... afraid. I'm afraid I'm gonna lose it if I'm not getting blood regularly."

"Yeah? You gonna get hangry?"

"I'm serious," Kyle insisted.

Cartman nodded, solemnly. "Alright. Well, you'll be glad to know that I've already got you covered."

"Huh?"

Cartman got up and grabbed his laptop off of floor near the bed and brought it over to the desk, opening it and sitting down in the rickety office chair. "I was fucking around on here last night while I was waiting for your gay ass to get back and I think I've got a lead."

Kyle leaned against the desk and peered down at the computer. "You've got an address?"

"You know I do," said Cartman.

Kyle nodded. "Alright. Sweet. Where is it?"

"Let's find out," Cartman said, bringing up Google Maps. He typed in the address and hummed at the screen. "It's in a weird area. I don't think this is a house."

"Bring up the street view," Kyle suggested.

Cartman did and cocked an eyebrow in response. "Huh."

"Is that a warehouse?"

"Looks like it."

From the street view, they could see that this wasn't an ordinary residence. It wasn't in a residential neighborhood, for starters. It was a large, inconspicuous-looking warehouse down by the ports on the other side of town. It looked abandoned, or mostly abandoned, and the windows were either boarded up or tightly shuttered.

Cartman looked at Kyle for confirmation. "Well, what do you want to do? Do you think it's doable?"

Kyle pursed his lips. "I mean, probably. Let's check it out, at least."

"What if it's Chris Hansen for real this time?" Cartman asked.

Kyle rolled his eyes. "Shut up. I'm pretty sure To Catch a Predator is on the east coast, anyhow."

Cartman snorted. "That makes it better, then." He stared at the screen for a few more moments and then shut his laptop. He leaned back in the chair and looked up at Kyle. "Hey,

do you wanna play video games?"

Kyle raised his eyebrows. "Uh, yeah. Sure." He really did, actually. He was desperate for that return to normalcy and, if he couldn't have it any other way, playing video games with Cartman like they did all the time back in South Park was a breath of fresh air in the fast-paced hell that was currently his life.

Cartman got up from the desk and unzipped one of the overnight bags that rested in the heap near the door. He pulled out a Nintendo Switch.

"I didn't even know you *had* a Switch," Kyle said.

"I didn't," said Cartman. "But now I do. I figured living in a hotel with you for the foreseeable future was going to get boring as hell so I had to take precautions."

Kyle sat down, cross-legged on the bed. "Okay."

"Anyhow," Cartman said, tossing him a Joy-Con, "let's play Smash."

They started up the game. Kyle picked Princess Peach and Cartman made fun of him for ten minutes before finally picking Bowser in some sort of ironic parallel. Kyle proceeded to completely annihilate him in the game. Cartman blamed it on Kyle's supernatural vampire reflexes and swore up and down that he would have won if it was a fair fight.

They were about to play another round when Cartman's phone buzzed on the nightstand next to him. He frowned and tossed his controller down on the bed, scooting back. He picked up his phone and looked at it for a second as it vibrated in his hand for a second before hitting the decline call button and putting it back down.

Almost immediately, it buzzed to life again with another call and Cartman let out an exasperated groan as Kyle looked on, inquisitively.

"Somebody's popular," Kyle remarked, dryly. "Who's calling you?"

Cartman shook his head. "Fucking Kenny." He picked up the phone again and declined the call a second time. After a second, it rang again.

"Answer it," Kyle insisted. He felt bad that they had left Kenny in South Park by himself. He and Cartman had been best friends for pretty much ever and it felt wrong to separate them. "You can talk to Kenny."

Cartman made a face and hesitated for a moment before, finally, answering the call.

"What do you want, Poor Kid?"

"*Dude, where are you?*" Kenny pressed immediately. Thanks to his superhuman hearing, Kyle could hear him clearly but he pretended not to. Kenny's question, though, made him uneasy.

"Nowhere interesting," said Cartman. "Don't worry about it."

"Are you in Seattle?" asked Kenny.

Kyle's blood turned to ice and his eyebrow twitched as he tried not to let on how audible the call was to him.

Cartman furrowed his brow. "Uh. Maybe? Why? Who's asking?"

"Me, man," said Kenny. *"Plus, Stan's in Seattle for some godforsaken reason and he said he saw you there and he thinks he's going crazy or something."*

Cartman swallowed and glanced over at Kyle briefly, out of the corner of his eye. "When the hell did Stan see me in Seattle?! I haven't seen *him*," Cartman lied.

"Dude, I don't fuckin' know. He called me last night rambling like a maniac about how he followed you to Seattle because you're some kind of psychopath and you know what happened to Kyle and blah blah blah," said Kenny.

Kyle fidgeted and he knew that Cartman could tell he could overhear the conversation at that point because Cartman looked over at him again with a pensive, worried expression and he put his hand on Kyle's knee, squeezing reassuringly.

"He thinks I killed Kyle or something," Cartman said into his phone. "Which I *didn't*, just for the record."

"I know you didn't," Kenny said.

"Yeah, well, tell that to Stan," Cartman huffed.

"I did! He wouldn't listen to me!" Kenny insisted. *"That's why I'm calling you to ask you what the hell is going on. I know you're not going to be okay after... well... you know."*

"Yeah," said Cartman. He frowned and his cheeks turned pink. "Something like that." He sucked in a long breath and let it out noisily. "Look, Kenny, there's a lot of weird, fucked up shit going on in this... Um... situation. And I don't know if it's cool if I tell you or not. Not over the phone."

"Shit, dude," said Kenny. *"It's that serious, huh?"*

"Yeah, things are weirder than they've been in a long time."

"Is it about what happened to Kyle?" asked Kenny.

Cartman looked to Kyle for affirmation and Kyle nodded.

"Yeah, kinda," Cartman said after a pause.

"Damn," said Kenny. *"Okay, well, stay where you are because I'm coming to Seattle too."*

"What!?" Cartman exclaimed. "No, you are fucking not."

"Yeah, I am!" Kenny said. "If you can't tell me what's going on over the phone, you're gonna tell me in person."

Cartman scoffed. "Kenny, that's dumb as shit. You're not driving like twenty hours to Seattle right now. I bet you don't even have the gas money. Plus, you know you can't leave Karen because of your savior complex or whatever the hell you've got going on there."

"My parents got busted for meth again last week so Karen got put in foster care again," Kenny said.

"Shit, Kenny. Sorry."

"No, dude, it's cool. It's the good foster home in North Park that we got put in when I was like fourteen. She'll be fine. Better off there than here. I'm coming to Seattle."

Cartman groaned and rolled his eyes. "Ugh. Fine. But I hope you're okay with murder."

Kenny made a surprised, intrigued little sound on the other end of the line. *"Ooh, you know I love death,"* he said.

"Yeah, sure, Kenny. Just don't tell Stan or I'll kill you," said Cartman. "When are you coming? I've got shit to do."

"Not a problem. Stan's currently a little unhinged. Anyhow, I can leave now and be there by tomorrow afternoon," Kenny said.

"Oh, great," said Cartman. "I'll text you, then. Later, Kenny."

"Later, Cartman."

Cartman hung up and threw his phone down on the bed and sighed. "Well, I guess Kenny's coming." He looked at Kyle with an apologetic sort of look.

"Okay," said Kyle. "I think we can trust Kenny."

He missed Kenny. He really did. He always brought that effortless, good natured humor to conversation and, as much as spending every waking moment with Cartman was beginning to grow on him, he was longing for a little human interaction that didn't always end in death or sex. Not that there was anything wrong with either of those things.

Cartman leaned back on his elbows and looked up at Kyle with a wry grin. "I see you're getting tired of me monopolizing your company."

Kyle smirked down at him. "Oh, I've *been* tired of it," he said.

Cartman breathed a laugh. "You gonna run away with Kenny, then? He's bi. I bet he'd be down for it."

"You think you're funny, don't you?" said Kyle.

"Actually, I think I'm hilarious," said Cartman.

Kyle licked his lips, idly, wondering why the universe would make someone so insufferable so alluring to him. He snapped his gaze away and turned back to the TV. In the moment, he didn't want anything other than to kiss him until he couldn't breathe but he held back. They still hadn't talked about what was going on between them and he figured he would just ignore it for as long as possible. Yeah, that seemed like a good plan. Good job, Kyle.

He picked up the Joy-Con off of the bed and toggled through the playable characters in the game. "Come on. I'll kick your ass a second time."

Rat Best Friend

Cartman left to meet Kenny near a food truck downtown the next day around noon. The sky was mostly overcast but thin rays of sunlight broke through the thick layer of clouds and danced along the asphalt of the streets. It was a warm, June day but Kenny was still in an orange and brown Baja hoodie when he gallivanted down the sidewalk. When he saw Cartman he dashed forward and met him in a tight hug, his head only coming up to Cartman's chest. Cartman gave him a firm pat on the back.

"Hey, Kenny," he said.

"Fuck, I missed you, man!" said Kenny.

"Gaywad," said Cartman.

"The last time I saw you was at Kyle's funeral, you dick!"

Cartman grimaced and turned. "Yeah, sorry about that. It's been weird."

"How weird? South Park weird or regular Cartman weird?"

Cartman drew his eyebrows together. "I don't think there's a difference, Ken."

"Sure there is! Anyhow," said Kenny, falling into stride alongside him as they walked along the sidewalk, "what are you doing in Seattle? You're a Cali guy. Or a New York guy. And I know you, dude. You wouldn't be in fucking Washington state if you didn't have a good reason."

Cartman frowned. Kenny was right, though he would never admit it. "Okay, hold on," he said. "You'll get it out of me in a minute. Relax. Lemme get a burrito or something first, damn."

Kenny waited patiently as Cartman ordered at the food truck. He returned with two foil-wrapped burritos and he shoved one at Kenny.

"Here."

Kenny let out an overly dramatic gasp as he took it from him. "I love you. I'll suck your dick right here."

Cartman whacked him upside the head as he walked past him to a nearby bench and sat down. "God, you're queer today," he said as Kenny took the seat next to him.

"Sorry," said Kenny, unwrapping his burrito. "I've been lonely. You know. Kyle died and then you left and then Stan left and then Karen went back to foster care and it's... Really, it's just been me. I talk to Butters sometimes but that's it." He looked down for a moment, looking pensive as he picked at the tinfoil wrapper.

Cartman let out a sigh. He felt bad, like he'd abandoned Kenny. Kenny had always been his best friend and it hurt him a little bit to leave. "Yeah, well, I'm sorry. It's been a weird couple of weeks."

"You keep saying that," said Kenny.

"That's cuz I mean it. The last two months haven't been anything I ever expected," said Cartman. He took a bite of his food.

"Two months?" Kenny asked. "You've only been gone for like three weeks or something."

"Yeah," said Cartman, his mouth full. "Everything *started* like two months ago. Keep up."

"Well, what happened in April, then?"

"I'll get there when I get there!" Cartman exclaimed.

"And you know I gotta ask," said Kenny. "What was going on with you and Kyle?"

Cartman gave an exasperated groan. "Can you stop asking questions for five minutes!? It's part of the story! It's a complex narrative! I will tell you when it is relevant!"

"Eric," Kenny said, sounding like he was almost pleading with him, "you *have* to tell me what's up."

Cartman frowned. "I know." He continued eating, looking thoughtfully at the ground. "I think... it'll be easier if I show you," he said, finally.

Kenny quirked an eyebrow. "Show me what?"

Cartman stood. "Come on. We need to go to the motel I'm staying at. You see what I'm dealing with there and then I'll answer all of your questions. Promise."

"Pinkie promise?" asked Kenny, holding out his finger, expectantly.

Cartman sighed and linked it with his. "Pinkie promise."

"Okay," Kenny said, hesitantly, standing and following him down the street again.

The motel was only a few blocks away and Cartman paused outside the door before swiping his key card.

"Listen," he said, firmly, pointing an accusatory finger at Kenny, "I want to show you this but you can't freak out."

Kenny scoffed, crossing his arms. "Dude, there's absolutely nothing you could show me right now that could freak me out."

"Okay," Cartman said, sounding skeptical. He unlocked the door and pushed it open.

"Welcome to this den of debauchery or whatever," he said, stepping inside, letting Kenny in

with him and shutting the door behind them.

Kenny glanced around, looking for something out of place.

It was then that Kyle came out of the bathroom in his boxers and a t-shirt, trying to scrub a set-in bloodstain out of his white sweatshirt with a Tide stain remover pen. He looked up and smirked a little. "Oh, hey Kenny."

Kenny raised his eyebrows. "Actually, you know what? This might be something that would freak a guy out."

"See? I fucking told you we had a situation," Cartman said, walking past Kenny who still stood motionless in the center of the room, and sat down on the bed. "Jew, explain your ordeal before Kenny has a fucking aneurysm."

Kyle pursed his lips, thinking for a moment. He sat down the stain stick and the shirt and turned away for a second, grabbing a clean pair of jeans off of the bathroom counter, tugging them on quickly. He leaned against the bathroom door jamb. "Okay, so... Do you remember when we got jumped a couple of months ago?" he asked, finally.

"Uh, yeah," said Kenny.

"Well... Remember when that guy bit me and then I bit him back and then I hit my head on the ground?"

"I think I was unconscious for that part," Kenny said. "But, I remember you got your rabies shot. And then you were sick as fuck for like a week."

"Yeah, well, as it turns out, it wasn't rabies," said Kyle.

"Tell him what you are, Kyle," Cartman said, grinning widely, bouncing a little on the bed.

Kyle scowled at him. "If you do the 'Say it. Out loud.' thing again, I'm going to kill you." He turned back to Kenny. "Kenny, you were right. Kind of."

"About what?" asked Kenny.

"That guy was a vampire," Kyle said. "And now I'm..." He trailed off and gestured to himself.

Kenny's jaw dropped. "No fucking way. Are you serious!?"

"Yeah, it's pretty cool. Right, Jew?" Cartman interrupted, reclining on the bed and crooking his arms behind his head. "Anyhow, me and Kyle kill people now."

"Not just random people," Kyle corrected. "Like pedophiles and Nazis and stuff."

"Bruh," said Kenny. "I'm gonna be real with you right now and say that's the coolest shit I've ever heard."

Kyle let out a sigh of relief. He knew Kenny would be okay with this but, after his encounter with Stan recently, he had a slight fear in the bottom of his heart that it would go badly. "Thank god," he said.

"It makes sense," Kenny said, "and it's not the weirdest thing that's happened."

Cartman shrugged. "That's probably true."

"What's even *weirder* than that is that *you* two ran off to Seattle together," Kenny continued. He looked purposefully at the single bed that Cartman was currently lying on.

Kyle turned bright red and Cartman laughed.

"It's not *that* weird," Kyle countered, defensively.

"Oh yeah? Is this what you guys were doing back in South Park too?" Kenny asked, gesturing towards the bed.

"No!" said Kyle.

"Yeah," said Cartman.

Kyle glared at him and Cartman shook his head.

"Okay, fine. So not in South Park but the Jew can't deny that he wants my body now. Isn't that right, Kyle?" he said with a self-satisfied smirk.

"Sure," Kyle said, flatly, giving him a bored, half-lidded glance.

Kenny raised his eyebrows and gave an excited, gap-toothed grin. "Yo, for real!?"

"Unfortunately," said Kyle.

Cartman scoffed. "Oh, shut up, Jew. You love it."

Kyle rolled his eyes. He did. He really did. Things with Cartman were explosive and intense and he relished every minute of it. "It's... something, alright," he admitted.

"Let me get this straight," said Kenny. "You guys are finally actually fucking!?"

"Why are you more interested in that than the vampire thing!?" shouted Kyle, incredulous.

"His tiny, malnourished brain can only handle one piece of information at a time, Babe," Cartman said, coming over and putting his arm around Kyle from behind.

Kyle glared and flashed his fangs at him. "Don't call me that."

Cartman retracted his hand, shoving it in his pocket instead. "Duly noted." He leaned against the wall. "Anyhow, yes. Me and Kyle are *intimately acquainted*." He wiggled his eyebrows, suggestively.

"Fuck off," Kyle spat.

"God, this is awesome," said Kenny. "I mean that about both things. The boyfriend thing and the vampire thing."

"We're *not* boyfriends," Kyle insisted.

"Fuck buddies. Whatever," Kenny said, waving a dismissive hand. He looked at Kyle for a moment and then grabbed him in a tight hug. "But fuck! I'm so glad you're not dead!"

Kyle laughed quietly and returned the hug. "Technically I'm kind of dead," he said. "But thanks, Kenny. I'm glad you're here."

Cartman scoffed. "Alright, Kenny, get your own vampire." He grabbed him by the hood of his jacket and lifted him backwards, about a foot away.

Kyle rolled his eyes and Kenny snickered.

"So, back in South Park, when me and Stan thought you guys were fucking, you were really just-" Kenny started before Cartman cut him off.

"I was doing him a solid and giving him some of my blood," Cartman said proudly, like he was a stand-up citizen for his gallant sacrifice.

"Oh, Eric, you big fucking homo," Kenny laughed.

Cartman's face fell. "Ay! Shut up!"

Kyle pushed past the both of them and took a black pullover hoodie out of his backpack, putting it on quickly and running his fingers through his hair. He looked at Cartman. "Did you tell him about tonight?"

"Oh, right," Cartman said, turning to Kenny. "Hey, so, do you wanna see how fucking hot it is when Kyle slaughters people?"

"Oh, hell yeah," said Kenny, breaking into a grin. "Boy's night." He sat down on the edge of the bed. "What's the plan?"

Kyle looked almost a little self satisfied, like he was anticipating this explanation and had rehearsed it in his head beforehand. He sat down at the desk and opened Cartman's laptop.

"So, essentially, we go on chat rooms and pose as kids," Kyle started.

"Oh, Cartman, like when you tried to meet older guys on the internet when we were kids?" Kenny remarked with a cheeky grin.

Cartman frowned. "Yeah. Something like that. Kyle, continue."

"Right, so we found this one guy-" Kyle brought up a mugshot of a balding man with a salt-and-pepper beard, "-who is blatantly on here trying to lure kids in. We've done this a couple

of times and they're fairly easy to weed out. Anyhow, I sent him a link to a site that gave him a popup that infected his computer with a type of spyware that helped me get his IP address and, from there, his physical address." He then brought up the Google street view of the warehouse he and Cartman had been scoping out the day before.

"Usually it's a house," said Kyle. "It's a warehouse this time so I'm assuming it's some kind of office or something? Either way, the actual location isn't important as long as this is where that guy is going to be."

He brought up another window on the computer with a floor plan open on it.

"So, I couldn't find the actual floor plan of this particular warehouse but I found the company that built it and it's the same layout as this other warehouse in, like, Jacksonville, Florida." He pointed to an area on the screen and traced a path with his finger. "I say we should go in through this window here on the first floor because, if you look on the street view, it's blocked off by an alley and nobody will be able to see us get in from the street, especially if it's dark. From there, we know the general layout and we can do a search through and see if we can find this guy in there somewhere. If he's not there, we can stick around until morning and see if he shows up. *But* his IP address usually pings from there in the evenings so I *think* we should be good if we go at night."

Kenny blinked. "Wow. Okay. That's really fuckin' thorough. When's the party?"

"Tonight," Cartman chimed. "Are you in or what?"

Before Kenny could answer, Kyle piped up again.

"Just to be sure you know what's going to happen, there will be murder, dismemberment, lots of blood, and I might do some weird vampire stuff. Are you cool with this?" He didn't mean to talk to Kenny like he's a child but he just wanted to be positive he knows what he's getting into later.

"Hell fucking yes," Kenny said.

Kyle nodded. "Right. Okay. Cool. Tonight it is, then."

In retrospect, none of them expected what the night would truly bring. They would only find that out later.

The Unlikeliest of Heroes

Chapter Notes

Just a quick heads up that there's some really heavy shit in this chapter! Keep an eye on the fic's tags and be careful because I really don't want anyone getting inadvertently triggered!

Kyle, Kenny, and Cartman walked down the dark streets near the pier. The moon overhead cast a sickly glow on the wet asphalt and the air smelled like seawater and petrichor. In the distance, there was the low, sad bray of a foghorn from a passing ship.

"Back! Street's! Back! Alright!" Kenny sang, accompanied by Cartman, while Kyle walked ahead, his hands stuffed in his pockets.

He turned to look at them over his shoulder. "Could you guys maybe try to be a little more inconspicuous?"

Cartman rolled his eyes, his arm slung across Kenny's shoulders. "Soul-sucking Jew. You're just jealous of what me n' Kenny have."

Kyle scoffed. "Yeah, I'm sure that's it."

They crossed an empty intersection, finally turning onto the sidewalk that ran along the side of the warehouse they were looking for. As they walked the hundred or so yards to it, Kenny put up the hood of his pullover and drew the drawstrings a little tighter.

"You know what this reminds me of?" he asked. "Back in April when we were coming back from the movies and that guy-"

"Yeah," Kyle said, suddenly, cutting him off.

"Diego," Cartman said in a fake, indistinguishable accent.

Kenny raised his eyebrows. "What? You guys, like, hang out with him or something?"

"Kyle does," said Cartman.

"I talked to him *once*," Kyle clarified, "when he came to apologize and explain what the hell was happening to me."

Kenny thought for a moment. "Yeah, you were kind of sick as fuck, huh?"

"Yeah, and then I almost snapped and killed everyone at prom."

"No way."

"Yes way," Cartman interrupted. "He was all twitchy and annoying in the parking lot while I was having a smoke."

Kyle thought back to that night and how it seemed like he got the first inklings of attraction to him then, in hindsight. He pursed his lips and turned back to keep his eyes on the sidewalk.

They walked the rest of the way to the warehouse and cut quickly into a dark alley along the side of the building. There was a boarded up window about a head higher than Cartman was tall and Kyle looked at it with scrutiny.

"Well," he said, "I can get up there. I don't know about you two assholes."

Cartman groaned and rubbed the back of his neck. "Ugh. It looked easier to get to on Google Maps." He unzipped his usual duffle bag and pulled out a crowbar. "I brought this, though."

Kyle took it from him and gripped it tightly. It was heavy and cold in his hands. "That'll work." He looks at Cartman expectantly. "Wanna give me a boost so I can get the boards off the window?"

"Ohhh no, no, no," said Cartman, crossing his arms. "You said you could get up there by yourself, douchebag. Let's see it."

Kyle frowned. "I can't use my hands to climb *and* use the crowbar at the same time, dickhead," he said, glaring up at him. "So, give me a boost."

Cartman glared back at him for a second before giving a resigned sigh. "Ughhhh. Fiiiiiiine." He kneeled down so Kyle could get on his shoulders and then he stood, raising Kyle up above the window ledge.

"Thanks," Kyle said, using the crowbar to pry the boards free, tossing them to the side. Underneath the boards, the window was dirty and he couldn't see through it. It had also been chained and padlocked shut. "Damn," he said. "It's locked. Somebody really doesn't want anyone getting in."

"Or somebody to get out," said Kenny.

Cartman quirked an eyebrow down at him. "Yeah? You think they've got werewolves in there or something? You better watch out, Kyle."

"Shut up," Kyle said. "You got bolt cutters in your bag?"

"Always," he said, shrugging his duffle bag off of his arm and tossing it in Kenny's general direction. "Get the bolt cutters out for the Jew."

Kenny unzipped the bag and dug through it, looking for them. He handed them up to Kyle when he found them but then kept looking through the bag after he did. "Damn, Eric, you've got, like, everything in here. Duct tape, flare gun, jumper cables..." He shot him a smirk. "Twinkies?"

"Fuck off," Cartman griped. "I get hungry."

"Why the hell do you have a flare gun?" Kyle asked as he unraveled the chains from the window.

"Because I didn't have a real gun! Focus, Kyle. You're getting heavy."

Kyle did and then he forced the window open with a hefty shove and hopped down from Cartman's shoulders. "Alright. Who's going in first?" He paused for a second. "Not it."

"Not it," Cartman said.

They both looked at Kenny.

He frowned. "Alright, I see how it is. Send in the rookie." He made grabby hands to Cartman. "Lift me up, Daddy."

"One, don't call me Daddy. Two, you short fuckers should have brought a ladder," Cartman complained. Still, he did what he was told and lifted Kenny up to the window. He was small so it was easy to get him up there, and he braced himself against the window frame.

"Now, be quiet once you get in there," Kyle directed to him. "We'll need to take a look around before I go apeshit."

"God, I can't fucking wait," said Cartman. "I have a boner already."

"Would you shut up!?" Kyle hissed at him, half-blushing.

Kenny nodded. "Yeah, you got it." He swung his legs up into the window and dropped down into the dark.

Kyle and Cartman listened for a minute, waiting to see if Kenny had run into trouble. When he was quiet, Kyle looked at Cartman.

"I guess I should hoist your fat ass up there, huh?" he said with a frown.

"Don't act so excited," Cartman said, flatly. "You know you love my ass." He gave a suggestive eyebrow raise.

Kyle narrowed his eyes at him. "Don't start." He huffed. "Anyhow, grab onto the window and I'll get you up there."

Cartman rolled his eyes but did, pulling himself up with his arms as Kyle pushed from beneath him. It was a bit of a struggle but Kyle had superhuman strength so it wasn't as hard as it would have been otherwise. Cartman, however, went in through the window head first and got stuck at the middle so Kyle scaled the wall and forced him in from behind before slipping through the window himself and landing on top of him in an unceremonious heap.

"Oof," Cartman said in a harsh whisper. "Graceful as ever, I see."

"Shut up," Kyle hissed.

The room was dark but Kyle could see just fine. The first thing he noticed was Kenny standing there, perfectly still, almost horrified in the low light.

"What?" Kyle asked him as he stood up and helped Cartman to his feet as well, but then, suddenly, he realized that they weren't alone.

Across the room, huddled in a corner, were about a dozen children of varying ages. They were thin, sparsely dressed and dirty, disheveled and with messy hair. They watched quietly, with wide, unblinking eyes as the three of them stood there in shock.

"Oh my god," Kyle said, realizing that this was far worse than anything he had anticipated. He glanced to Cartman who was pale and looked like he might be sick, and then to Kenny who was still slack-jawed and stunned.

"W-What are we going to do?" Kenny asked after a second.

Kyle thought for a moment. They *could* just leave. The three of them could leave and call the police and go back to the hotel like nothing had happened. But that wasn't what Kyle was about to do. He was angry. He was fucking pissed. The hair on the back of his neck prickled and his eyes were bright and glowing.

"Kenny," he said in a low, trembling voice, "stay here with the kids. Keep them calm and don't let them listen too closely to what's going to happen outside this door." He took his burner phone out of his pocket and handed it to him. "When I give you the signal, call the cops."

Kenny looked at the kids and then back to Kyle with a nod. "Right. Okay. I can do that." He took a step towards the kids, holding his hands out to make sure they knew he wasn't a threat. "Hey, I'm Kenny. We're going to get you out of here, alright?"

Kyle turned to Cartman. Kyle knew that, as a victim of child sexual abuse himself, this was going to be hard for him to deal with and he worried about him terribly. "Are you okay?"

Cartman glanced at him with wet, anxious eyes but there was a flicker of rage in them as well. He didn't look okay but he still nodded. "Yeah."

"Okay," said Kyle. His voice was terrifyingly even. "You're going to come with me and we're going to put an end to this."

He took Cartman by the hand and dragged him to the door. He gave one last look to the kids that were watching silently from the corner and he wondered what horrible things they had seen and experienced. That fueled him with even more anger and need for divine retribution to the people who caused this. He tore his gaze away from them and tried the door. Unfortunately, it was locked from the outside.

"Shit," he hissed.

"You can unlock it with a credit card or something," one of the kids piped up, speaking finally. She seemed to be the oldest at about fifteen and several of the younger kids clung to her desperately. "I tried to get out once."

Kyle glanced over at her and nodded. "Thank you." He rummaged around in his pocket and took out his wallet. All he had was the ID that Cartman had made for him but he figured it would do. He considered asking Cartman to do it since he had opened other locks like this recently but he still seemed rather dazed and dissociative and Kyle figured he'd just let him have a moment. He did what he had watched him do before and slid it along the side of the door until it clicked open.

"Come on," he said to Cartman, pulling him out of the room with him, shutting the door behind them.

The hallway was empty, a dead end on one side and a long, dark corridor the other way, with a light at the end of it. Kyle let out a short, breath. His adrenaline was already through the roof. He turned and stood directly in front of Cartman before they went any further, though, taking both of his hands.

"Cartman," he said in a soft, yet firm voice, "are you going to be able to do this? I don't know what we're going to run into but if you think you can't-"

"Kyle..." Cartman interrupted but Kyle didn't stop.

"If you think you can't and you get hurt, I don't think I..." he trailed off.

Cartman bit his lip and nodded. "Yeah. I'll be fine." His expression changed, turning dark and determined. "Let's light these fuckers up."

Kyle's eyes flashed and he gave an adamant nod. "Right." He almost wanted to say more to him then, just in case. He knew they were going into certain danger and he didn't know how many adults were going to be there nor what they would be armed with. He forced himself to turn away, though. This wasn't about him anymore.

Keeping close to the walls, they crept down the hall towards the light. Once they got closer, Kyle motioned silently for Cartman to stay back as he slipped forward and peeked into the room at the end of the hallway.

It was a large area with a cement floor and high ceilings. The man with the salt-and-pepper beard that they had been catfishing sat a computer on a desk against the western wall. There were a few chairs and a sofa towards the back of the room and two more men sat there, playing cards. Kyle could clearly see that one of them had an assault rifle slung over the back of his chair.

He backed out of the room and turned to Cartman, speaking to him the softest whisper he could manage.

"There's three of them and they have at least one gun," he said, giving Cartman an unsure look. "Maybe you should go back with Kenny..."

Cartman shook his head. "I'm staying."

Kyle let out a quiet sigh. "Okay. Just... stay back here and wait until I yell for you. No matter what happens, stay here until I tell you to come. And just... Just be careful." He brought his hand up almost to cup Cartman's cheek softly but he pulled it away at the last second and turned around. He shook his hands a little bit and pushed his hair back, hyping himself up, and then he stepped into the doorway.

"Hey," he said loudly.

All three of the men immediately stood and the one closest to the gun grabbed it and held it up.

"This is private property," Salt-And-Pepper-Beard said in a sharp, angry voice.

"Not anymore," said Kyle. "Once the cops come and put a stop to the child trafficking, they'll bulldoze this place to the ground."

The dark-haired man with the gun raised it and pointed it at Kyle. "Nobody's calling anyone." He looked to the third guy, a huge, burly, bald man, for confirmation.

Kyle raised his hands up to show that he didn't have a weapon and he took a few steps forward. "I'm going to be perfectly clear here. I'm going to kill each and every one of you in the worst possible ways you can imagine. If you have any other friends in on this or complicit family members, I'm going to hunt them down and kill them next, I swear to you right now." His voice was firm and steady, almost unnervingly so, although he was slightly trembling with rage and bloodlust to the point where he was nearly vibrating with energy.

The bald-headed ringleader laughed a cold sort of laugh and then glanced at the gunman. "Kill him."

Pop! Pop!

Kyle thought he would have had time to react before this happened but he was wrong and two gunshots rang out and the bullets found their way into his shoulder with a sickening thwack. He recoiled instantly with an inhuman hiss, but only for a second. He glanced up, his irises a candescent, emerald green as he locked eyes with the gunman.

"Drop it," he snarled.

The gunman, now subjugated, obeyed and he tossed the rifle to the ground, kicking it towards Kyle. The others looked at him like he was insane and then to Kyle with dawning horror.

"What the fuck?"

Kyle reached down and picked up the gun. "Cartman!" he called.

Cartman came around the corner with a bitter visage, stepping behind Kyle. Kyle didn't look at him but tossed the gun in his direction.

"Here."

Cartman caught it and looked at it dumbly for a split second and then raised it. "Kyle," he growled under his breath, looking at him, worried and a little pissed off.

Kyle still didn't turn his head to him. Instead, he stared at the men, locking eyes with the biggest one, and dug his fingers roughly into the wound on his shoulder, prying out the spent bullets and tossing them to the ground between them. Vampirism had his pain tolerance through the roof and he was already beginning to heal, although dark blood still seeped through the fabric of his shirt.

"Big mistake," he said in a rough, hoarse sort of voice. In an instant, he attacked the man with the salt and pepper beard, immediately on his back, his claw-like fingernails digging into the meat of his cheeks. The man hollered with pain and fear, tucking himself forward to try and get Kyle off of him. He held fast, though, and reached down to the man's throat with one hand, drawing blood that ran down his neck and soaked the collar of his button down shirt. Without hesitation, Kyle tightened his grip and pulled. With a sickeningly wet tearing sound, Kyle ripped the man's throat out and let him fall to the ground in a pool of his own blood. Kyle's mouth watered at the smell of blood but he didn't drink from him. He only needed one and he would save that for last.

The other two men were horrified, as they rightly should have been. The big bald man hid behind the sofa like a coward. So much for being the boss around there. The dark haired man who had previously had the gun, bolted forward in an escape attempt but he was blocked by Cartman, pointing his own weapon back at him, bumping him in the chest with the barrel of the gun.

"Dead end, motherfucker," Cartman said. He pulled the trigger but the gun jammed and wouldn't fire. "Shit!" he exclaimed with a panicked grimace.

The dark haired guy sneered at him. "Not so tough now, huh, fat ass?"

Kyle whipped around then, his eyes furious. "WHAT did you just fucking call him!?" He leaped off the ground and flew forward with a punch, sending his fist directly through the man's head in a spattering of blood. "I'm the only one who's allowed to call him that!"

Cartman looked at Kyle, almost in disbelief, but vaguely grateful. "Thanks, Jew,"

Kyle didn't stop to bother with pleasantries. He still had another murder to commit. He turned towards the last guy, the ringleader of the bunch, and started slowly towards him as he backed up against the farthest wall, begging and pleading for his life.

"End of the fucking line," Kyle growled in a low voice, his neon eyes shining onto his sharp cheekbones, casting an eerie glow on his face. He didn't pay attention to the blubbing pleas, focusing only on the sheer terror in his eyes. It was intoxicating, almost a religious experience and Kyle was an emissary of God bringing divine retribution on the sinners of the earthly realm.

He was a good head shorter than the man he was about to kill, and far less built but he had him in tears. Kyle grabbed him by the collar of his shirt, bringing him down closer to his face as he bares his fangs. Then, Kyle quickly bites down hard into a the large artery in his neck as he struggles against him.

The taste of blood is extra satisfying this time as it rushes into Kyle's mouth. He drinks slowly, savoring it, drawing out the death and making it as painful as he can. It takes about five agonizing minutes until he's drawn every last drop of blood from the man's body and then he drops the gray, ashen corpse to the ground. Crimson dripped from the corners of Kyle's mouth as he turned and surveyed the carnage he had caused.

There was blood everywhere. Three dead bodies of three awful men who had absolutely deserved what they had gotten and probably worse. There were spent bullets on the floor and the place was trashed. Kyle was proud of the work he had done.

He was trembling slightly, almost vibrating, his eyes radiant and vivid, and his cheeks were warm and flushed with red. His eyes were wide and his expression feral. He had never felt more like a deity than in that moment.

Cartman, on the other hand, looked horrified. Not at the bloodbath, but because of the disgusting things these men had carried out and the children who had been hurt at their hands. He looked down at the gun he was holding and then at the bodies and then he turned and vomited behind the computer desk.

Kyle looked worried and stepped towards him, his head cocked to one side. "Cartman... Are you okay?"

Cartman leaned against the desk with both hands, exhaling deeply. He spat on the ground and nodded, holding a thumbs up. He cleared his throat and composed himself a little, hesitating with the gun before slinging it over his shoulder. He didn't know if he might need it again.

"Yeah. Fine," he grunted.

Kyle looked like he didn't believe him but they needed to go. They could discuss it later in the hotel room. Right now, Kenny was still in the back room with the children that they needed to get out of there as soon as possible. Kyle grabbed Cartman's hand and pulled him along, down the hallway.

Kyle pounded on the door, not wanting to let himself in, all covered in blood and gore, in front of the kids.

"Kenny!" he shouted. "The coast is clear! Call the police and get out through the window! We'll meet you in the alley outside!"

"You got it!" Kenny shouted from the other side. He looked at the kids who were huddled around him for safety. "Alright," he said to them. "Uncle Kenny's gonna call the cops and get you guys out of here."

He looked down at the burner phone in his hand and hesitated for a moment before clearing his throat and dialing 911.

When the operator answered, he used a deep, gravelly voice that he hadn't used since he was a kid playing superheroes with his friends. He figured it was only right that Mysterion make a comeback when he was saving children again. He quickly gave the address and said that there were children that needed to be rescued as well as where to find them in the building and then he hung up, shoving the phone in his pocket so they could dump it on the way back to the motel.

"Alright, I gotta go, guys," he said to the kids in his normal voice. "I'm gonna stick around outside until I'm sure the cops are coming and you guys are gonna get back home, okay?"

He used a couple of cardboard boxes to hoist himself up into the window again, dropping back down into the alley.

Kyle and Cartman were already there, waiting for him after coming out through a side door. Kenny looked at Kyle, assessing the damage and noting that he was bloody as hell and his eyes were glowing eerily.

"Jesus, Kyle," Kenny breathed. "You guys good?"

"Yeah," Kyle said, looking pensive and restless. He glanced at Cartman, not sure if he was okay or not, but Cartman nodded, his hands in his pockets, still unusually quiet with his eyebrows drawn close together with a frown.

Kenny noted the bullet holes and blood on Kyle's shoulder. "Fuck, did they shoot you?"

"Yeah, it's not a big deal," Kyle said, brushing it off.

"It is a big deal," Cartman said, finally speaking up in a low, gruff voice.

Kyle looked at him and opened his mouth to speak but then he heard sirens in the distance, quickly growing closer. "We need to go now," he said. "We can't be here when the police come." He grabbed Cartman's hand with one hand and Kenny's with the other and, like usual, they took off into the night.

Glory and Gore

When Kyle got out of the shower, after scrubbing blood out from under his fingernails for a good half an hour, still so full of vampire energy that he felt like he was about to burst, Kenny and Cartman were sitting on the starchy motel bed, watching the twenty-four-hour news station on TV. As expected, the current footage was of the warehouse they had been at earlier in the night. Police lights flashed red and blue against the side of the building and the news anchor recounted the situation for viewers at home.

"They said that was a pretty big sex trafficking ring," said Kenny, not looking away from the television. "There are a couple of other guys involved but the bust made them pretty easy to find."

"Are the kids okay?" Kyle asked, standing with his hands on the desk, trying to ground himself and push down all the adrenaline that was coursing through his veins. The adrenaline itself was fine but it made him want to do more. Kill more. It was addicting and he needed to know when to stop.

"Yeah," said Kenny. "They sent them to the hospital and they're going to try and reunite them with their families soon." Kenny finally looked at Kyle, almost scrutinizing, looking him up and down. "They're calling you a hero and a monster."

Kyle frowned. That was what he was, really. He saved a bunch of kids and took out a trafficking ring but at what cost? His humanity? What would he end up as, in the end? The hero or the monster?

He shook his head as if trying to physically force those thoughts from his brain, and then he looked at Cartman. He was cross-legged on the bed, looking pensively down at his lap with his hands balled into fists. Kyle's expression softened and then turned extraordinarily concerned.

"Cartman," he said. Cartman didn't look up so he repeated it again. "Cartman!"

Cartman glanced up quickly, almost like he had been startled from deep thought. He didn't say anything but looked at Kyle seriously. His eyes were slightly glassy and bloodshot and his jaw was tensed. He looked awful and haunted and, deep down under all that, like some sort of angry, traumatized kid.

Kyle didn't know what to say to him for a moment. It wasn't like Cartman to be this quiet and it was a little distressing. It hurt him to see him like this and he wished he could make things at least a little better. He stared at him for a few seconds, scouring his face for any sort of clue as to what he should say to him.

"Are you okay?" Kyle asked, eventually.

Cartman glanced away and nodded unconvincingly.

Kyle stepped towards the bed, like he wanted to sit down next to him and try and give him some comfort but something stopped him. Some part of him still felt like it was on fire, like he wanted to crawl out of his skin. He ran his hands through his hair, almost pulling at it.

"Shit!" he exclaimed, suddenly.

Kenny looked up this time. "What?"

Kyle shook his head. "Nothing, it's just... Fuck! You know?"

Kenny nodded. "Yeah..."

Kyle paced around the room a little, his pulse buzzing beneath his skin, his hands trembling. He bounced up and down on his toes, trying, unsuccessfully, to shake some of the anxiety out of his bones.

He thought about the kids from the warehouse and he wished they could have gotten there sooner. He hated the thought of what would have happened if they hadn't gotten there at all and, even worse, what they had already been through. It was enough to make anyone nauseous.

Kyle sat down on the floor with his head between his knees, still tugging nervously at his curls. He wanted to will his eyes to stop glowing or to force back the lingering need for blood that always came with acts of violence. He couldn't do it, though, and he got lost in the concentration of trying to when Kenny spoke up again.

"Kyle," he said, his brown eyes looking concerned. "Are you good?"

"No," Kyle said. He let out a huffing breath, pressing his hands to his eyes and then running them back up his face to his hair again. "No, I'm not okay. This isn't... This isn't fun anymore. It was good for a while but now..." He trails off, his voice fading into a whisper. "People are so fucked up..."

With that, Kenny slapped both of his thighs and got up. "Welp. I need to get plastered."

Kyle looked up at him from the floor with bloodshot eyes. "How?"

"I obviously have a fake ID," said Kenny, a bit too grim. "There's a bar down the street and I'm going to make myself forget everything that happened tonight. You guys coming?"

"No," said Kyle. He glanced at Cartman, half expecting him to get up to join Kenny on his trip but Cartman remained motionless on the bed. He only shook his head so slightly that one could almost miss it.

"Alright," Kenny sighed, shoving his hands into his hoodie pockets. "I'll be back later."

"Take this," Kyle said, standing and grabbing an extra key card for the room off of the desk and handing it to Kenny. "Just in case."

Kenny nodded and took it, slipping it into his wallet. "Got it." He gave both of them a nod of acknowledgment and headed for the door. "Later."

When he was gone, Kyle turned his gaze on Cartman once more. He looked solemn and grave, his jaw taut and his eyebrows drawn close together. Kyle stared at him for a moment, until Cartman looked up at him with wet eyes.

"What?"

"You're not okay," Kyle observed.

"No," Cartman agreed, almost reluctantly. "I'm not. Neither are you."

Kyle shifted on his feet. He and Cartman were both in the middle of a crisis but on opposite ends of the spectrum. Cartman was broken and distressed like a hurt child. Kyle was manic and livid and vibrating with energy.

Before he could stop himself, Kyle was on his knees on the bed, in Cartman's lap, with his legs straddling his hips. He put both hands on the sides of Cartman's face, holding him steadily. He looked at him sincerely, pressing their foreheads together.

"Do you want to forget it?" Kyle asked, barely audible. "I can make you forget it."

He could. He had made Stan forget about their encounter in the woods and he was sure he could make Cartman forget about the trafficking incident and maybe even his childhood trauma through vampire hypnosis. His eyes glowed in preparation. He was sure Cartman would say yes.

"No," said Cartman.

Kyle was confused. He sat back and cocked his head to the side. "No?"

"No," Cartman repeated. He sounded determined and serious.

"Why?"

Cartman swallowed. "I don't want to forget it happened. I want to move past it on my own. I want to make sure it doesn't happen again."

He almost didn't sound like himself. Cartman wasn't usually this firm. He was often resolute, sure, but he rarely had this kind of bitter, heartbroken resignation in his voice. Again, he sounded like a small child that had been disappointed too many times.

"It won't," Kyle assured him. "I won't let anyone touch you. Ever."

Cartman exhaled deeply. "I know. I don't just mean me."

"Oh," said Kyle.

"Nobody deserves what those kids went through."

“I know.” Kyle paused. “Neither did you.”

Cartman looked taken back for a second, like he didn’t expect Kyle to say that. He almost looked like he might cry but, instead, he closed his eyes and sighed.

“Yeah.”

He opened his eyes and he looked less somber and more disapproving.

“You let them shoot you,” he said in a scolding voice, frowning tightly.

“I didn’t *let* them shoot me,” Kyle retorted. “I thought I could... I wasn’t fast enough.” He seemed uncomfortable admitting that.

“It didn’t matter anyhow, though,” he continued. He pulled down the neckline of his shirt and exposed the area of his shoulder where he had been shot. There were two small divots in the flesh but, other than that and some faint, pink scarring, it had healed almost completely.

“See? I’m fine.”

“Yeah, well, I didn’t know that! You told me to stay behind the wall and I had to hear them try to kill you and I couldn’t do shit!” Cartman said. He scowled and turned his head away, pouting. “You scare the shit out of me on a fucking daily basis, you asshole.”

“I’m sorry!” said Kyle with an exaggerated shrug. “I’ll try not to get shot next time!”

“You fucking better!” Cartman exclaimed. “If you get shot again, I’m breaking up with you.”

Kyle’s cheeks pinked up with the fresh, hot blood in his veins. “We’re not even dating!”

Cartman flushed a bit too. “Yeah, well, I’ll ask you out and then, when you say yes, I’ll break up with you!” he argued.

“Who says I’ll say yes?” Kyle sniffed defiantly.

“Me,” said Cartman. His voice was almost normal for a moment, gruff and sardonic. “You know that’s what you want, huh, Kyle?” he teased, raising his eyebrows.

Kyle rolled his eyes. “Shut up. This is not the time.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.” Kyle got serious again. “I’m... afraid.”

“Of what?”

“What I want to do to people. I’m worried it’s never going to be enough. That I’m always going to want to kill more and more and more until I can’t stop. It’s addicting. It’s like crack to me.”

Cartman nodded sagely. “Crackhead vibes. Classic.”

Kyle frowned. "Can you go back to being sad and traumatized again? You're annoying."

Cartman snorted. "Yeah, sure. Let's talk about my PTSD and mental issues. *That'll* really set the mood."

"The mood for what!?" yelled Kyle. "I'm trying to be serious!"

"Fine," Cartman said. "I'm listening."

Kyle gave a short huff and shook his head. "I don't know. It's the fucking bloodlust, dude. It never stops. Sometime I might not be able to distinguish right from wrong anymore. Maybe I'll end up like Diego and attack some random teenagers in the street."

"I thought you liked that guy," observed Cartman.

"Sure, he seems okay," said Kyle. "And that's kind of freaky too because it means that even nice people can succumb to it."

"Succumb," Cartman repeated in a mocking tone. "That's such a vampire word."

"I *am* a vampire! I'm going to use vampire words! I'm going to talk about crimson ichor and the haze of consumption and stuff!"

Cartman rolled his eyes. "So pretentious. Just say you get lost in the sauce and get over it."

Kyle made a small snarling sound in his throat. "You are really pushing it right now, Cartman."

"Hm," Cartman said, tilting his head slightly to the side. "What's your biggest issue here, then?"

Kyle looked down at the bed. "That they're right about me. On the news. That I am a monster. I mean, I've killed like six people and I feel *nothing*, Cartman. No remorse. No regret. And I'm going to do it again. I am actively anticipating doing it again. Isn't that fucked up? Just a little?"

"No," Cartman said. "But, you might be asking the wrong guy."

"I don't want to ask anyone else."

"Yeah? Why's that?"

"Because I don't think I'd like their answer."

Cartman thought for a moment. "I think you might be a monster," he said, finally. "But that's not really a bad thing. You're, like, a good monster who kills the real monsters."

"So, like Mothra."

“Yeah, you’re Mothra,” Cartman said with a grin. “Anyhow, you know what I mean. And they’re not just calling you a monster. They called you a hero. You’re kind of a superhero now.”

“Yeah, call the Avengers,” Kyle said sarcastically.

“I’m serious,” said Cartman. “The stuff you can do... That’s really fucking cool, dude.” He looked slightly uncomfortable complimenting Kyle so much right here but he continued regardless. “So, stop worrying about it. I don’t care who you kill. I’m on your side.”

Kyle opened his mouth to say something but his voice caught in his throat. Cartman’s words made some kind of heat rise inside of him, welling up to the surface from the pit of his stomach, and he wasn’t sure how to feel about it. He felt the warmth in his cheeks and he looked away.

“Thanks,” he said after a minute.

“Whatever,” said Cartman. He flopped down on the bed, bending his arms behind his head on the pillows. He raised his eyebrows at Kyle. “You wanna fuck before Kenny gets back?”

“No,” said Kyle.

“Okay, me neither. I don’t think I could get it up after tonight anyhow,” said Cartman.

Kyle made a face. “Good to know.”

Regardless, Kyle moved back on the bed as well, not needing prompting from Cartman to curl up next to him this time. He lay on his side, one arm draped across Cartman’s middle, the other bunched up underneath himself, his head half on Cartman’s shoulder, half in the crook of his neck. Cartman brought a hand down from behind his head to trace the side seam of Kyle’s shirt under his fingers as he stared at the dingy ceiling.

Kyle closed his eyes and tried to kick everything out of his mind except for the feeling of being there right then. It didn’t really work but he tried. Cartman was always so warm, it was like snuggling up to a furnace, heating Kyle’s pallid skin from the outside. Kyle exhaled against Cartman’s side and slipped his hand up under Cartman’s shirt just to feel more of his warmth. First, Cartman let out a quiet hiss in response to Kyle’s cold fingers, but then he rolled over and pulled Kyle into him.

“Jew,” Cartman said after a minute.

Kyle glanced up at him expectantly. “What?”

Cartman paused, considering his words. “Nothing,” he sighed instead, nestling his face into Kyle’s rat’s nest hair.

Kyle didn’t believe him but let it slide anyhow. It had been a long night and there was a lot out in the open now, as well as a lot of things that had been left unsaid, lurking just beneath the surface.

“Go to sleep,” he said. “Things will be better in the morning.”

Cartman swallowed and Kyle could see his Adam’s apple bob in his throat. He wanted to kiss it but he didn’t move.

“Okay,” said Cartman.

Kyle reached out and turned off the light on the bedside table, washing the room in blue-black darkness. Then, he returned to his position against Cartman’s side, tucking his nose into the point where Cartman’s jaw met his neck. He exhaled and Cartman got goosebumps.

“Goodnight,” Kyle said. He already knew he wasn’t going to be able to sleep but he figured he would try anyhow.

An hour or two passed and Kyle could tell that Cartman was still awake by his infrequent shifting against him and by the way his breathing hadn’t peacefully evened out with sleep, yet neither of them said anything.

Then, there was the click of a lock and streetlights cut through the darkness of the room as Kenny stumbled in through the door, shutting it loudly behind him. He was drunk, just a little, just enough to make him loud and clumsy.

“Whoa,” he said, blinking. “It’s dark in here.”

“That’s because people are *trying* to sleep,” Cartman grumbled.

Kenny groped blindly towards the bed, bumping into it with his knees and collapsing on it, landing directly on top of Kyle.

“Oof,” Kyle said.

“Oh, shit, sorry, dude,” said Kenny. He rolled over against Kyle’s other side, sandwiching him between himself and Cartman. He cuddled up against Kyle’s back like it was second nature despite really never doing that before.

He laughed to himself, under his breath. “You guys are cute.”

“Yeah, thanks, Poor Kid,” Cartman said, seeming annoyed. Soon, though, he relaxed and his arm tightened around Kyle’s side again, even brushing up against Kenny’s without a care.

“Goodnight,” he said with finality.

“Goodnight,” Kyle said.

“Good fuckin’ night,” said Kenny.

No Rest for the Wicked

Kyle couldn't sleep. He would have if he could, but he couldn't. Instead, he stared pensively up at the water-stained ceiling. On one side of him, Cartman slept fitfully, his face scrunched up occasionally, like he had been dreaming of something unpleasant. It was fairly obvious what it was probably about. Kyle didn't want to think about it. On his other side, Kenny lay against him, snoring softly and drooling all over Kyle's shoulder. Kyle didn't make much of an attempt to move him, though. This was fine.

And, yet, he couldn't sleep. He couldn't even pretend to sleep. All the electric adrenaline from earlier in the night still rushed just beneath the surface of his skin, begging for release. He felt restless and unsettled. He wanted to run and jump and climb and rip and maim and kill. He wanted to kill again so bad that it made his throat feel dry.

With much concentration, Kyle was able to bury his bloodlust among other things in the back of his mind. Still, however, the restlessness continued. Unceasing and unyielding. He was desperate. He needed to move.

Carefully, as to not disturb either Kenny or Cartman, Kyle slipped out from under their arms and heads and legs. It was a slow and deliberate, like a high stakes game of Jenga. Finally, though, he made it out, swinging his legs quietly off the bed, letting out a deep exhale, almost of relief.

He got up and found his black canvas shoes, slipping them on. He looked around for a dark colored hoodie and remembered he had left one in the bathroom so he went to retrieve it. When he came back out, though, Cartman had silently gotten up and was standing near the door with his arms crossed and eyebrows drawn close together.

"What are you doing?" he pressed. His form was wide and intimidating in the low light.

"Nothing," Kyle said, pulling the hoodie on over his head. "Taking a walk. I don't know."

"Don't leave again," Cartman said. His voice wavered slightly and he cleared his throat. "Please."

"Kenny's still going to be here," said Kyle. "I wouldn't leave you if you were going to be alone tonight."

"I don't give a shit if Kenny's here," Cartman said with a huff. It seemed a little bitter but his tone was despondent. "I don't want you to go."

"Why?" asked Kyle, looking at him curiously in the dark. "You know I'll be back. I always come back."

"No, I don't know that!" Cartman said, a bit too loudly for the time of night but Kenny kept snoring on the bed. Cartman shook his head and continued. "You got shot today, you

motherfucker! Somebody could go Van Helsing on your stupid, Jew ass!" He swallowed. "So I don't know that you'll come back. I don't."

"I'll be fine," Kyle insisted. He tried to move past him but Cartman juttet his arm up in the doorway to stop him.

"Kyle," Cartman said. He sounded desperate, his voice breaking. "Please. Please stay."

Kyle stopped for a second, his eyes locked on Cartman's, the two of them sharing some sort of silent exchange, staring each other down like they would when they would argue back in school. Things were so different now that the connection was almost lost on them.

Kyle shook his head, finally. "I have to go," he said, ducking under Cartman's arm. He glanced over his shoulder. Cartman looked incredibly hurt and, if Kyle wasn't so antsy to leave, he would have felt bad.

"I'll be back before sunrise," Kyle promised. That would give him a few hours. He figured that would be enough time to purge some of the nauseating angst he felt in his chest before he came back and they could talk again and work through it together.

Cartman curled up his lip in disdain, his eyes flickering with wounded animosity. "Whatever," he said, sharply.

Kyle frowned, drawing his eyebrows close together. He didn't say anything else, though. Instead, he just left, slamming the door behind him a bit too hard.

Outside, it was raining, or misting, as it seemed. The air was damp and heavy, replete with moisture and the smell of the sea.

And, then, again, Kyle was loose on the city of Seattle.

The motel wasn't too far from the heart of the city where Kyle was free to practice his skills, not that he needed much practice. His fingernails were sharp enough to dig into the brick and mortar of buildings and strong enough to claw his way up them without much effort. His legs were stable enough to launch him from rooftop to rooftop and sturdy enough to easily absorb the shock of landing on his feet from great heights and onto concrete. He was quick and deft with his movements and time almost seemed to slow down for him when he maneuvered through the night, allowing his body to nimbly shift and adjust in midair to match the ability of the most graceful acrobat. The city was his playground.

Eventually, though, he stopped, almost thrusting himself off of another building but skidding to a halt at the last second instead, his hands gripped firmly on the ledge surrounding the rooftop. He panted, trying to catch his breath as he looked out at the city like a sentry. He was the watchman, the vigilante. Gotham had Batman and Seattle, for now, had Kyle.

He hopped up on the parapet and perched like a gargoyle. His hood was pulled up over his head and he looked like a shadow in the dark, aside from the bright, lucent green of his eyes and the flaming red of his hair that stuck out in messy, fiery curls around his face. He crossed

his arms over his knees, watching the city lights glitter in the foggy haze of the rain. He breathed in a heavy breath and let it out harshly, tasting salt on his tongue.

The guilt of leaving Cartman at the hotel was beginning to set in and Kyle's chest ached a bit. Kyle wasn't usually one to run away from his problems so this was particularly troubling. Though, he had been doing a lot of running away lately, he thought. Faking his own death, hypnotizing Stan, leaving Cartman after everything that had happened... It felt an awful lot like he was avoiding important people in his life. His parents, Stan, and most of all, Cartman.

Cartman and his pained expression. Cartman with his past trauma. Cartman with his overprotective streak. Kyle felt that the latter was beginning to border on possessive and Kyle didn't know how to feel about it. On one hand, he wanted to be able to freely explore his new life but, on the other hand, he found himself to be extremely possessive and protective of Cartman as well. In a way, it was a balance. They needed each other, they both knew they did. But, still, it was a recent realization and would take some getting used to.

Kyle rubbed his forehead tensely. What a night. What an exhausting night.

He debated going back and apologizing to Cartman, holding onto him tightly and going back to bed. He couldn't bring himself to move from his perch, though. He had a million thoughts in his head and no one to talk about them with.

He had Cartman, sure, but he couldn't talk to Cartman about his feelings *about* Cartman. He had so much that he wanted to say to him but he couldn't bring himself to go right out and say it. Not without talking through it with someone first to sort out his feelings. And he couldn't talk to Kenny about it either. He knows that he *could* talk to Kenny but it felt weird. And, besides, Kyle felt that Kenny was probably already talking about things with Cartman on his end. It was fruitless and the thoughts ate him up inside.

And then, there was the bloodlust. The bloodlust that came in waves and washed over him, pulling him down, drowning him in the need to kill. Images flashed behind his eyes of the mangled bodies of the disgusting men he had killed and it made his mouth water.

Kyle wanted to rip his hair out and scream into the night. He wanted to cry, honestly. It had been a while since he had cried. Really cried. With streaming tears and hiccuping sobs. He had cried a little after Stan had found him and a little after his first kill but the last time he had really let himself lose his composure was the night he had faked his suicide and escaped to Cartman's house. He just couldn't now. He couldn't bring himself to let the tears out that wanted to come. They still stung at his eyes, though, as if being held in by an invisible force.

He let out a quivering breath and then dropped down from the rooftop onto the fire escape, riding the rusty ladder down to the ground with a clang.

He slowly began to wander down the rain-slick sidewalk, still pondering over what he should do or who he could talk to. As he lost himself in his thoughts, he began to realize that nostalgia was a real bitch. He grew desperate and doleful and then, at a rundown payphone, Kyle made his first big mistake.

"Hello?" Stan sounded groggy over the phone, like he had just woken up.

Kyle pulled his hood down more to keep out the drizzling rain as he held the grubby receiver close to his face. "Hey. It's me."

Stan made a noise of surprise and, when he spoke, his voice was breathy and low. "...Kyle?"

"Yeah," said Kyle. He hated that he had to go through this whole exchange again for the second time. "Don't freak out, okay?"

"You... You're alive?" Stan said in disbelief.

Kyle gave a short sigh. "Kind of. Look, are you still in Seattle?"

"Uh... Yeah..." Stan seemed like he was in shock. Kyle could picture the tight, worried expression he more than likely had on his face as he spoke. It would have seemed endearing if Kyle wasn't currently so distraught. He was still kind of upset with Stan after everything, as well. He just needed to talk to him. He needed to try and get his best friend back.

"Can you meet me someplace? I can explain everything if you just meet me somewhere," said Kyle.

Stan hesitated a moment. *"I... I guess so? I'm just... I can't believe you're not dead..."*

"Yeah, neither can I," Kyle said, a bit dryly. He swallowed. "There's a park around here somewhere. Lake Union? Can you meet me there in like ten minutes?"

"Y-yeah, sure," said Stan. *"Where at in the park?"*

"I can find you," Kyle said. He was sure he could. He knew Stan's scent and he had impeccable night vision.

"Okay," Stan said, slowly.

"Okay. I'll see you there," Kyle said.

"Wait!"

"What?"

Stan was quiet, like he had changed his mind on what he wanted to say, before he spoke up. *"Is Cartman with you?"*

Kyle stiffened, clenching his jaw a little. "Right now? No. It's just me. I'll... I'll tell you everything when I get there. I promise. I just... I just really need to talk to you, Stan." His words came out smaller than he anticipated and he sucked in a short breath. "I'll see you there," he repeated.

"Okay," said Stan. *"I'll see you in a few."*

Kyle hung up, lingering for a moment in the payphone awning. He wondered if this was a good idea and knew it probably wasn't. There was no going back now, though. The deed was

done and now Stan knew, once again, that Kyle's death was a fraud.

Kyle hoped he was wrong. He hoped that this wouldn't end up as a mistake. But, really, it's the worst possible thing he could have done.

He would find that out later.

You Could Kill Me and You Should

The rain had stopped by the time Kyle had walked to the park and the moon was high and bright in the sky. Despite this, Kyle kept his hood up, his hands stuffed into the front pocket of his hoodie. His eyes were low, still reflective in the moonlight, watching the shadows his feet cast in the streetlights. His chest was tight and he was a little bit nauseous at the thought of seeing Stan again. Nevertheless, he proceeded.

He walked in a repetitive loop around the center of the park. The park wasn't like the parks he had been to in Colorado. It was mostly flat and open, with a few trees scattered about. It was very late and it was mostly empty aside from a young couple making out and a few homeless people, one of which Kyle had emptied his pockets to. He didn't have much on him since he didn't think to bring his wallet, but there were a few spare crumpled-up dollar bills at the bottom of his pants pockets that he left just because it felt like the right thing to do.

After a few loops, he noticed Stan. He caught his scent before he saw him. In an unfamiliar city, Stan still carried the smell of home with him and Kyle was drawn to it. Then he saw him in his brown flannel shirt and faded blue jeans, standing near a water fixture with his arms crossed, his hands tucked into his armpits.

Kyle let out a deep, hesitant breath in a whooshing exhale and made his way towards him. When Stan noticed him, he raised his eyebrows in surprise and his eyes got wide, the moonlight casting them a ghostly blue.

Kyle gave a halfhearted wave.

"Hey."

Stan was stunned silent for a moment before he spoke.

"Shit... It really is you..." he said, his voice hoarse and breathy with disbelief.

Kyle shrugged, pushing his hood back to reveal his fiery curls. "Yeah. Kind of." He cleared his throat. "It's... Uh... It's good to see you."

Before Kyle could say anything else, Stan had him in a tight hug, sobs racking his chest. Kyle froze for a moment, unsure of what to do, but then he relaxed into the hug, holding tightly to Stan's shirt with his balled up fists. Stan wasn't quite as tall as Cartman but Kyle still only came up enough to tuck his face into the crook of his neck, his eyes pressed tightly shut.

This was still his old Stan. This was his best friend again. Not angry, paranoid Stan. Just Stan. And that was good.

"I'm sorry, Stan," Kyle mumbled into the collar of Stan's shirt. "I'm sorry."

"Jesus fucking Christ, dude," Stan sniffled, easing up a little on the embrace but still holding Kyle firmly to him. "I thought you were dead."

"I know," Kyle said with a sheepish grin. "That was kind of intentional."

"I just can't believe you're alive! God, your *parents* are going to be so happy you're alive!" said Stan.

Kyle's face fell and his heart dropped all the way down to his feet.

"Stan," he said, "I'm not alive... When I leave here, I've got to go right back to being dead. To you and to everyone else."

"W-What do you mean?" Stan asked, letting his hands drop to his sides.

Kyle sighed. "I faked my death for a reason, Stan. I can't go back on that now. I never could. It's better this way."

"But *why*?" Stan asked, desperately. He reached back up and gripped Kyle's shoulders.

"It's complicated, Stan," Kyle exhaled, shaking his head. "It's so, so complicated. I don't want you to get caught up in everything. Please believe me when I tell you that I'm doing this for your own good."

Stan didn't like that answer. "For my own good!? Kyle! I'm already caught up in this! Please, just tell me!"

"Look, if I tell you, Cartman's gonna be--"

"Cartman!?" Stan exclaimed, aghast, cutting Kyle off. "This is about *Cartman*!?"

"No!" Kyle protested, putting his hands up. "No, he's just been helping me! Leave him out of this."

Stan gave a scoff of disbelief. "Leave him out of this!? Kyle, do you even hear yourself? You're talking about Cartman! Eric fucking Cartman!"

"I know! I know I'm talking about Eric fucking Cartman!" Kyle's expression softened when he thought about Cartman back at the motel. "He's... We're..." He bit his lip and glanced away.

Stan raised his eyebrows as he began to understand. "Oh."

"Yeah."

Stan drew his eyebrows together in thought or realization or both. "So I was right."

Kyle sighed. "Not back then. But now..." It was hard to restrain himself from immediately going off on a tangent about his feelings for Cartman and his hesitations and reservations but he tried his best to hold back for now. He just wanted to talk about his love life with his best friend.

"Yeah," Kyle went on. "Just... yeah."

“Hm,” Stan said, still thinking. “So you faked your own death... to date Cartman?”

“No! How many times do I have to tell you that this isn’t about him! That was just... collateral damage,” said Kyle.

“Then tell me what happened!”

Kyle groaned. “Stan, come on. I don’t want to explain the whole thing to you again.” He quickly shut his mouth, realizing that, as far as Stan knew, he hadn’t explained this to him at all.

“Again?” Stan asked, quirking an eyebrow. “When did you ever...” he trailed off and a look of realization passed over his face. “Wait...”

“What?”

“Last week... I followed Cartman into the woods... And there was a body... And you...” He pointed a finger at Kyle. “You were there.”

Kyle stared at him with wide eyes. Like when Stan had struggled through Kyle’s hypnosis in the forest, it seemed as though it was wearing off, giving him the foggiest memories of the night Kyle had killed the youth pastor. Kyle swallowed, unable to think of an excuse on the spot. And, even if he could have, Stan still continued.

“Kyle, you killed somebody,” Stan said. “You killed a bunch of people.”

Kyle glanced away and nodded solemnly. “I did,” he admitted. There was no use keeping it a secret now. It was best to get it all back out in the open now. Especially now that Stan didn’t have a gun pointed at Cartman during it.

“I’m a vampire now,” Kyle said after a brief pause. It sounded incredibly stupid to him every time he said it out loud. Like he was a kid playing pretend. Unfortunately, though, it was very real.

“I know,” Stan said, furrowing his brow. “I don’t know how I know, but I know.”

“Because I told you,” Kyle said. “I told you when you stopped us on that road. I told you and then I made you forget it because that’s what I can do now that I’m a vampire. I can do lots of things now. But I have to kill people to survive.”

Stan was quiet for a while before he finally spoke up again. “I don’t understand,” he said. “Why wouldn’t you tell me?”

“Because I didn’t want you to think I was a monster!” said Kyle.

“Are you a monster?” asked Stan.

Kyle hesitated, glancing down at the ground. “I... I don’t know. I don’t think so. I don’t *want* to think so.”

“Who have you killed?” Stan asked. He was staring at him with a stony expression, like he was silently judging him, ready to bring down the axe if he didn’t like the answer.

“First, a pedophile. He had child porn on his computer. Cartman knocked him out and then I killed him. Then, a Nazi. It was in an alley by the bar in Denver when you followed us the first time. I’m sure you heard about that one. Then, here in Seattle, I killed a youth pastor who molested children and hated Jews. That’s who’s body you caught us with. And earlier tonight I busted a sex trafficking ring and killed three of them. I’m sure you’ll see it on the news,” Kyle explained. “I’m telling you this because I trust you. You’re my best friend and I trust you.”

Stan still stared at him. “Kyle…”

“I mean it!” said Kyle, tears springing to his eyes once. “I just want to be your friend again because my life is a fucking mess and I want you to understand that I’m still me! Please. I need you to understand that.”

Stan let out a heavy sigh. “Kyle… If you’re killing people, even bad people, you’re not the same person that I knew.”

“But I *am*,” Kyle pleaded, his voice tearing up through an octave. “I promise, Stan, please…”

“Dude, just look at you,” Stan said, shaking his head apologetically. “You’re killing people. You’re dating Cartman. You don’t even look the same.”

“Because I’m a *vampire*!” Kyle said in exasperation. He buried his face in his hands for a second or two. “I can’t help that!”

“There’s nothing you could do to change yourself back?”

“No,” Kyle said, dismally, his eyes cast downward. There had persistently been moments where Kyle loathed himself for what he had become and wished desperately to be human again. This was one of those moments. He missed the warmth in his veins, pink cheeks, and the need for sleep. He ached to feel the sun on his skin again. Above all else, he missed the fleeting fragility of humanity. He wanted to age. He wanted, more than anything, to grow old and die peacefully in his sleep someday. He wanted to get gray hair and wrinkles and feel the time that had passed. Not like this. Not young and alone forever, losing everyone he cared about over and over, always needing to kill to survive.

“I would turn back if I could,” he said, his words catching in his throat. “I wish I could.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Stan said. His voice sounded bitter and cold. “Whatever you did, you’ve already done. You can’t take that back.”

Kyle narrowed his eyes at him. “Can’t take back what? Killing *pedophiles*? Why would I want to take that back, Stan? I’m proud of what I did and I’m going to do it again. I’d probably do it again even if I wasn’t a vampire. The people I kill deserve what they get.”

“I’m just not comfortable with you playing god like that, Kyle,” said Stan. “You shouldn’t be the one who decides if people live or die, even if they’re bad people. Where do you draw the line?”

“At being actively malicious! There’s right and there’s wrong, Stan! Somebody has to be on the light side and I still think that it’s me. I really do think I’m doing the right thing.”

“Whatever! I don’t care,” said Stan. “It just proves my point. If this is who you are now then... Then you’re not my best friend anymore. You have to take responsibility for your actions, Kyle.”

“I *am* taking responsibility for my actions!” Each word out of Stan’s mouth cut like knives. As much as he was insistent that Kyle had changed, it seemed as though Stan had as well. He was vicious and vindictive now that he had been scorned and left out of Kyle’s supernatural life. It kind of made Kyle’s blood boil.

“And what if somebody *you* care about gets hurt? Like Cartman,” Stan said.

Kyle stiffened, his hands balled instinctively into fists. The thought of Cartman getting hurt put him on edge. “He won’t.”

“Can you be sure about that?” Stan’s expression was blank and his words seemed almost taunting.

Kyle immediately got the sense that this was less of a warning and more of a threat. His eyes flashed and his lip curled back into a snarl. “What is *that* supposed to mean?”

Stan didn’t say anything but he still stared Kyle down with a dark glower.

“Listen to me right now, Stan,” Kyle said, his voice low and dangerous. “If you fucking touch him, I will kill you without hesitation.”

Stan nodded, shoving his hands into his pockets. “Okay. Well. Good talk, Kyle.”

Kyle still glared at him. “Go home, Stan. Go back to Colorado and leave us alone. Leave *me* alone because I don’t want to have to hurt you.”

“Yeah, sure,” Stan said, his voice dripping with sarcasm.

Kyle closed his eyes and sighed. “Goodbye, Stan.”

Stan turned of his own accord and gave Kyle a last glance over his shoulder. “Goodbye, Kyle.”

It's Pathetic, I Know

Kyle knew he had to be back at the motel by sunrise. He didn't have a phone on him, or a watch, for that matter, but he was pretty sure he still had a couple of hours left and he was going to use those hours to the fullest. He was so upset after his exchange with Stan and the night he had had so far that he felt like he almost couldn't catch his breath. His blood was surging and electric in his veins and he needed to stop and compose himself or he felt like he might explode or kill someone else.

He found a small public restroom in an overgrown park and ducked inside. It was dark and dingy, with only a few small stalls and a pair of urinals. But he didn't care about any of that. He stopped at the wide mirror above the sinks and stared at his reflection in the greenish glow of the flickering fluorescent lights.

Once again, he could hardly recognize himself. His appearance hadn't changed this much in such a short span since puberty and he didn't like it. It gave him a sort of dysphoria about his humanity. And, it was fairly odd to actually consider his appearance. The longer he looked at his reflection, the less familiar he found his face until it seemed as if he was staring into the eyes of a stranger.

His hair was a wild mess of curly, red tangles and his eyes were lustrous and ghostly. Sharp cheekbones, aquiline nose, all pale and peppered with freckles. He didn't dare part his lips to see his fangs, jutting down like knives from his gums. He had seen enough of those to last a lifetime.

He looked tired and strung out and he couldn't imagine what anyone could possibly see in him right now. Anyone, of course, meaning Cartman. But, the feeling seemed to be mutual.

He exhaled deeply, his damp breath fogging up the spattered glass for a second. It took him a long while to actually realize that he was crying. Tears silently rolled down his cheeks, dripping from his nose and chin. He looked almost shocked by the revelation and he reached up and touched them gingerly with his fingers.

He wasn't sure what he was crying about or why but it wasn't hard to guess. Things with Stan were over for good, it seemed, and it had been a very long and stressful night full of bloodshed and old trauma. Kyle sniffed and wiped his eyes with his hands. There was something very human about crying.

He stood there for a while longer, talking to himself, mostly. Why not, he figured. This bathroom didn't seem like it had been used (or cleaned) since the nineteen-nineties. He didn't think he had to worry about someone walking in on him. And he found himself to be a particularly good conversation partner sometimes.

"It's not your fault. It's not your fault," he told himself over and over again in the mirror. "It's not your fault that he doesn't understand. You can't expect him to understand. You are an immortal and he is just some guy."

He sucked in a sharp breath and turned away, running his hands through his frizzy curls. He didn't want to think of Stan as just some guy. Just another human. He had been his best friend since birth. They had made themselves blood brothers over the summer between seventh grade and eighth. It felt wrong to try and forget about him. To see him as nothing. There just wasn't anything else Kyle could think to do. If Stan wasn't willing to understand his new way of life, then Kyle would just have to move on without him.

Kyle wasn't sure how long he stood there, staring at himself in the mirror, giving himself the same old pep talk, listening to the steady hum of out-dated fluorescent lights trying to drown out his thoughts. Eventually, he sighed and heaved himself away from the sink. He gave a halfhearted effort to fix his rat's nest hair and then gave up. He dried his eyes on the sleeve of his hoodie, flipped up his hood, and headed for the door.

However, when he took that first step out of the bathroom, it was like walking directly into the fire of a flash grenade and Kyle put his hands up to shield his eyes and stumbled back into the building, landing on his ass on the grimy tile floor. As it turned out, he had spent so much time self-reflecting and being angsty with his reflection in the mirror that the sun had come up and his poor, unprotected vampire eyes just couldn't handle it.

"Fuck," Kyle muttered, pressing his palms to his eyes to try and quell the stinging and watering. He blinked a few times, trying to get his vision to readjust to the dimness of the restroom. He stuck his hands into his hoodie pocket, fishing around for his sunglasses and, sadly, came up empty handed. He remembered, then, leaving them on the dresser in the motel room. Great. He was still several blocks from his makeshift home and there was absolutely no way he was going to be able to walk back with the sun blinding him like this. He was sure he would get hit by a car or fall into a manhole or just end up with permanent optical damage from the vampire-damning UV light.

"This is bullshit. Seattle's supposed to be *cloudy*," he grumbled to himself, using the counter top to hoist himself back up onto his feet. The floor was disgusting and weirdly slimy so he washed his hands with extra soap. Hygiene was not only reserved for the living.

He reached into his back pocket to pull out his phone and call Cartman to pick him up but then, with dawning horror, remembered that he didn't have a phone right now. Kenny had used it to call the police about the trafficked children and then they had tossed it off a pier to get rid of any evidence of them being there before heading back to the motel. His only method of communication was currently at the bottom of Puget Sound. Double great.

He leaned against the wall and sighed into his hands. He was royally screwed. He'd have to wait there until either the sun went down or someone came in with a phone he could borrow to call Cartman. And, by the looks of the place, it didn't seem like anyone was likely to come by any time soon.

He felt a twinge of guilt, remembering how he had promised Cartman that he would be back by sunrise and how he had left him after one of the most traumatic experiences of his life. Now it was daytime and he wouldn't be able to come back to him or let him know what happened. This was bad.

It took seven sad and agonizingly boring hours before someone finally came in to use the restroom. Kyle asked them to use their phone and, initially, they refused. Kyle didn't blame them. He knew he looked wild and unhinged. He wouldn't have trusted his phone with someone like him either. Luckily, Kyle was able to compel them to hand it over while they took a piss in one of the stalls.

Cartman didn't pick up the first time Kyle called. So, Kyle called again until he finally did.

"Hello...?" Cartman asked, sounding hesitant about the unknown number.

"Hey. It's me," said Kyle.

Cartman's tone of voice changed immediately, from wary to almost hysterical. You really can't spell "hysterical" without "Eric."

"Where are you!? Are you okay!?" Cartman asked frantically.

Kyle sighed. "I'm fine. I lost track of time and then the sun came up and I couldn't see to walk back and I don't have a phone. I'm in a public restroom," he explained.

"Hm," Cartman's voice was low now, almost gruff. *"You promised you would be back."*

"I know. I'm sorry."

"Do you have any idea how fucking worried I've been?!" Cartman huffed through the phone. *"I thought something bad happened! I thought you got picked up by the cops or staked or..."* He trailed off momentarily, his voice faltering slightly. *"...I thought maybe you left me."*

Again, Kyle was hit with another wave of guilt.

"I didn't. I'm sorry," he repeated. "I didn't mean to piss you off or hurt your feelings or anything." He leaned up against the bathroom wall as he talked. "We can talk about it when I get back. Can you just come pick me up?"

Cartman was quiet for a minute before he spoke. *"...No."*

Kyle frowned. "What do you *mean* 'No!'?"

"You got yourself into this mess, you can get yourself out of it," said Cartman, sounding angry and unamused. *"This isn't my problem."*

Kyle stammered dumbly, unable to form a cohesive sentence for a good while as he tried to come to grips with the fact that Cartman was just *leaving* him here to stew in his emotions for the rest of the day. "Cartman! What the fuck!? Just come and get me!"

"No. You're gonna sit there and think about your actions," Cartman said.

"So, what!? This is like... time out or something!?" Kyle yelled incredulously, his voice ripping through an octave, cracking like he was going through puberty again. "I'm not five!"

Cartman scoffed. *“Well, maybe if you didn’t want to get stuck in a public restroom for an entire day, maybe you shouldn’t have left last night.”*

Kyle could almost hear the pissy, nonchalant shrug Cartman was sure to have been giving him. This was absolutely maddening. He made an angry, almost hissing sound in his throat.

“Fuck you!”

“No, fuck YOU!”

“I can’t believe you’re making me wait here for another seven hours, you fat fuck!” Kyle exclaimed.

“Oh yeah!? Well, I can’t believe you fucking ditched me last night, you stupid Jew!” Cartman countered.

Kyle knew he was right and that was a terrible, terrible feeling. He gave a frustrated huff. “Fine. I’ll be back later, I guess.”

“Don’t care,” Cartman said quickly. *“Do whatever you want. I might not even be here when you get back.”*

Kyle drew his eyebrows together in a frown, his heart sinking. “Cartman…”

“Stop. Just don’t,” said Cartman.

“Cartman, listen-” Kyle started but he was cut off again.

“ You left. You did this to yourself. Just… Just go sit in your fucking bathroom. Bye.”

And, then, Cartman hung up and Kyle just stared blankly at the phone for a minute, trying to process what just happened. That felt weirdly like a breakup or a lover’s quarrel despite not even being in a relationship with Cartman in the first place. He swallowed thickly, deleted Cartman’s number in the recent calls, and sat the phone down on the side of the sink. It’s owner came out shortly and Kyle compelled them to forget the whole ordeal. Also to wash their hands.

Then, Kyle was alone again. It seemed to be a theme for him these days.

He still had seven hours to go.

This is Love

It was well into June by then and the days were long and warm so it took closer to eight hours until the sun had finally set enough for Kyle to creep out of his bathroom prison and march himself back to the motel. He hurried, despite the guilt and dread he felt about Cartman acting as a weight in his stomach. Still, he dragged himself along, his legs grateful for the movement. He still had a huge amount of vampire energy in his system but the restlessness had all but tapered out as he waited, fruitlessly, in the restroom for hours upon hours. Now he was just ready to be anywhere else but there.

He got to the motel and slid his card key to open the door. It was one of the only things he had had the foresight to bring with him when he left. Inside the room, it was dark. Kyle didn't have to turn on the lights to know that Cartman had been telling the truth. He wasn't there and the room was empty. Kyle's heart sank all the way down to the pit of his stomach and he wanted to cry. He turned the light on anyways.

It had been a long day of sitting alone and doing nothing so Kyle figured he would just continue where he had left off. He sat down on the bed and the old vintage box spring creaked under him. He laid back and looked up at the ceiling, finding pictures in the water stains and streaks of plaster. The motel room had seemed too small until it was just him in it. Now it felt huge and empty.

He sat up after a few minutes and looked around. All of Cartman's things were still strewn about the room and Kyle let out a sigh of relief. Cartman was materialistic. This meant he was coming back.

The only question was when.

It turned out to be at around one in the morning. Kyle was still up due to not having to sleep and all, reclining on the bed, reading a book in the low lamplight, when there was the reassuring click of the door unlocking. Kyle sat up and put his book to the side as Cartman came stumbling in smelling like cheap booze and cigarette smoke. He blinked in the dim light and slammed the door shut behind him with his foot.

"Hey," Kyle spoke up.

Cartman looked down at him and frowned, almost like he didn't expect to see him there. "Oh. You made it back."

"Yeah," Kyle said, slowly. "Where's Kenny?"

"Got his own room," said Cartman. He took a pack of Marlboros out of his pocket and stuck one between his lips, lighting it up.

"Why?" Kyle asked.

"Don't fucking ask me," Cartman snapped. "Probably because I'm a belligerent drunk."

Kyle made a face. “Is that so? You’re not even really drunk. I can smell your blood alcohol content or something.”

Cartman sneered at him. “Fuck off, Kyle.”

Kyle gave an irritated huff. “I don’t get why you’re so mad at me! I said I was sorry!”

Cartman pulled the cigarette from his mouth and put it out on the corner of the desk, giving Kyle a dangerously furious look as he ground the ashes into the wood. “I don’t care! I don’t care that you’re sorry! I don’t care that you’re here, I don’t care that you left, I don’t care that you got your dumbass self stuck in a bathroom for fifteen hours! I don’t care! I don’t care anymore!”

Kyle jumped to his feet, hurt and angry. “What the fuck is *that* supposed to mean!? You’re just done then? Done with everything?” His voice cracked slightly when he spoke and he hated that it did.

Cartman looked away and shook his head, staring down at the floor and refusing to meet Kyle’s eyes. “You never listen to me!”

“That’s bullshit!” Kyle cried. “I listen to you all the time!”

“Not when it matters!” shouted Cartman, wheeling around to point an accusatory finger at Kyle, jabbing it into his chest. “Never when it matters!”

Kyle knocked Cartman’s hand away. “I fucked up the time and got stuck in a bathroom! That’s not some... some... era-ending ultimate sin!” he yelled back.

“Yeah, but you’re never *careful!*” Cartman shouted, almost sounding desperate. “You’re *never* careful!”

“So what!? I’m a fucking vampire! I’ve been careful for my entire life! Things are different now!” Kyle huffed and turned away.

“I wish you would just... I mean... I *need* you to...” Cartman seemed to be having trouble finding what he wanted to say and his face was red and contorted into a frustrated and almost confused scowl. Then, he suddenly grabbed Kyle tightly by the shoulders and whipped him around so he was facing him, glaring down at him with an intense stare.

“I just wish you would be careful because I love you!”

Cartman sucked in a sharp breath after he said it, like he couldn’t believe the words that just came out of his own mouth, his cheeks blooming red with blush. Still, he wasn’t done and he kept going, moving his hands up from Kyle’s shoulders to cup his face instead.

“I love you. I love you so much and I don’t think I could live with myself if I let something happen to you. Kyle, I’m... I’m so fucking in love with you and that scares the shit out of me,” he said, unable to stop himself from continuing, his voice tremulous. His eyes were shining with tears as he looked breathlessly down at Kyle.

Kyle, on the other hand, was completely speechless. He had expected Cartman to insult him or make some sort of scathing remark or literally anything but this.

Eric Cartman loved him. It wasn't just sex. It wasn't just a crush or a fleeting, fickle thing. He was in love with him. He wouldn't have admitted it out loud if he didn't, Kyle knew that much. Cartman loved him and he cared about him and everything reckless thing that Kyle did killed him a little bit inside. And Kyle didn't even realize it until he physically said the words.

Kyle couldn't think straight or respond or really even breathe; he could only stare back up at him with a stunned expression, his eyes wide with surprise. He wanted to say *something*, he just couldn't make his brain function in a way that could produce real, human words. He swallowed hard and let out a small, shuddering breath.

"Eric..." he started. The name sounded slightly odd on his tongue. He wasn't sure of the last time he had said Cartman's first name aloud to him. It felt strange and intimate.

Cartman cut him off before he could continue, though. His voice was frantic and desperate and his eyes were wet and pleading. He ran his fingers along Kyle's jaw, tightening his grip on his face slightly. He shook his head, like he didn't want to know what Kyle was going to say next.

"Just kiss me. Please kiss me."

Kyle nearly hesitated. He had things to say and he wanted to say them. But Cartman sounded so hopeless and needy that he couldn't stop himself from bringing himself up on his tiptoes to press their lips together softly.

It was only soft for a moment, though, because Cartman kissed back like his life depended on it. His fingers moved upwards to tangle in Kyle's curls and then down his back to his hips where they rested and pulled him closer into himself. Then, he turned him around so that Kyle's back was pressed against the wall.

Kyle loved being pushed up close against Cartman's body these days. He was warm and soft and he loved the smell of him. Kyle brought his hands up to Cartman's chest, just to touch him, then to his shoulders. He parted his lips slightly so that Cartman could slip his tongue inside, running it gently along the underside of his sharp canine teeth.

Kyle kissed him and kissed him and kissed him and then decided he needed more so he pushed Cartman back, hard, so that the back of his knees hit the end of the bed, knocking him onto his back. Almost instantaneously, Kyle was pulling him up towards the top of the bed, straddling his hips. They were both hard at that point. It didn't take them long. Not when there was so much constant and palpable sexual tension between them at all times.

"Oh fuck," Cartman muttered under his breath as Kyle pressed himself down against him, grinding their cocks together through their pants. He made a sound that was almost a sob in his throat.

"Eric," Kyle said in a hoarse, trembling voice. "Listen to me."

He paused, actually kind of unsure of what he had intended to say in the first place. He decided to fill in the silence with his true, actual feelings. Things that he'd wanted to say the night before when he worried about Cartman's safety in the warehouse and afterwards, when they sat together on the bed after Kenny had gone. Things he had been feeling for a while and only now had the courage and fortitude to admit aloud.

"I love you, too. I love you and I've been in love with you since we left Colorado and probably before then. Probably forever," Kyle said, shockingly honest and sincere, the words even surprising even himself, just a little. His eyes flooded with tears, if only because Cartman looked up at him stunned and teary-eyed himself. "I don't know why but I do and it's been killing me not to say it."

"Really?" Cartman asked in disbelief, his voice breaking just a little. "You mean that?"

"More than anything," said Kyle.

Cartman sniffled and gave a stunned, teary laugh. He wiped his eyes on the back of his hand and sat up a little, against the pillows, running his other hand down Kyle's back to his hips. "God, Kyle, you make me emotional, you stupid, bloodthirsty Jew."

Kyle leaned down to kiss him again, softer now. "Well, you make me feel a lot of shit, Eric Cartman," he said, pulling back and shaking his head, half-smirking. "You insufferable asshole," he added for good measure.

Every awful thing from the last forty-eight hours had essentially dissipated from his mind and the only thing he could think about was Cartman. Every entrancing, addicting thing about him.

Cartman let out another breathless laugh, half-sobbing at the same time, pressing his face into the crook of Kyle's neck, holding onto him tightly. "You don't even understand what you do to me."

Kyle tilted Cartman's chin up with his finger, looking him in the eye intensely. "Show me, then."

Cartman smirked and started to undo Kyle's pants button. "Tch. Needy."

Kyle leaned onto his back and pulled the rest of his pants off as Cartman removed his shirt, then he climbed back into Cartman's lap to kiss him. His dick was hard and throbbing between his legs and Cartman glanced down hungrily at it, biting his lip. His eyes glinted eagerly.

"Hmm. What's this?" Cartman asked, running his finger along his length.

Kyle hissed through his teeth and looked down at him half-lidded. "What do you think it is?" He reached down and undid Cartman's pants next, pulling out his cock as well, equally hard, precum already dribbling down the slit of it. "I could ask you the same question."

Cartman's cheeks got red and he swallowed thickly. "What do you wanna do about it?"

Kyle shrugged and reached over to the nightstand, bringing over the lube that had been conspicuously left out from a few days ago. He squeezed some out into his hand and stroked it along Cartman's cock. "Maybe this?"

Cartman's eyes fell closed for a second and he made a small whimpering sound.

"That could work," he said.

Kyle teased his own cock against it, rocking his body slightly. Then, before Cartman could open his eyes again, Kyle raised himself up on his knees and popped the head of it into himself.

Cartman's eyes snapped open wide and he grabbed tightly onto Kyle's hips.

"Jesus Christ!"

Kyle tilted his head to the side as he moved his hips a little, sinking lower into Cartman's lap. He looked at him, almost smugly, feigning innocence. "What?"

"N-Nothing!" Cartman cried. Then, he got a wry grin on his face and his grip on Kyle's hips tightened as he pulled him down onto his cock completely, very suddenly. He groaned a little and he breathed a laugh. "Go big or go home, Kyle."

Kyle yelped a little as he was suddenly filled up and stretched open. It felt fantastic, though, and he rested his hands at Cartman's chest as he rolled his hips, getting a feel for it in this position. "Hm. Well, I don't have a home to go to, so I guess I'm going big."

"Damn straight you are," Cartman said, bucking his hips up a bit, pushing himself further into Kyle with a soft grunt.

Kyle fell forward against Cartman's chest. He started into a rhythm, raising himself up a few inches and then letting himself fall back into Cartman's lap. He ran his hand through his hair, the other scraping his fingernails against the nape of Cartman's neck.

"We could have been doing this in high school. It feels stupid that we weren't," Kyle observed, panting a little as he grinds his ass down on Cartman's cock.

Cartman breathed out against Kyle's throat, kissing along his collarbone. "Yeah. Coulda saved me years of dating Heidi Turner for starters."

"Don't talk about Heidi right now," Kyle said, shaking his head, suddenly jealous of anyone who had ever touched him before.

"Okay," Cartman said in a low voice. "You want me to talk about something else? You want me to talk about how fucking amazing you feel? So fucking tight. Shit, baby."

The pet name made butterflies churn in Kyle's stomach in the weirdest way and he wondered when he became okay with that. He growled in his throat and leaned down to suck at Cartman's neck. He could feel his pulse race beneath his lips and it turned him on and made him thirsty. Without warning, he curled his lips back and sunk his fangs into Cartman's flesh,

euphoria hitting him with the gush of blood against his tongue. He wasn't very hungry; mostly he just wanted to taste him.

Cartman's cock twitched violently inside of Kyle's body as he bit him and he let out a whiny cry. "Oh god, yes..."

After a few mouthfuls of silky, rich blood, Kyle pulled back slightly, kissing at the wound and gliding his tongue along it, catching the drips that rolled down Cartman's neck. He sat up and looked at Cartman, his lips cherry red and his eyes glowing.

"You're my favorite flavor," he said in a husky whisper before pressing their lips together. He slipped his tongue into Cartman's mouth, letting him taste his own blood there. It was hot and tender and Kyle never wanted anything else other than this. He wanted this forever.

After a few minutes of making out with Cartman as he rode his cock, Kyle's rhythm began to falter as he got close to the precipice of orgasm. Each movement he made dragged his cock along Cartman's stomach, providing ample friction.

"Ah... Eric... I can't... I mean... I'm gonna..."

Cartman nodded, seemingly almost blissed out of his mind already. "God, go on. Me too," he gasped, moving his hips up in time with Kyle.

Kyle reached down and took Cartman's face in his hands, pulling him into a desperate kiss as he gave in and came in short spurts between the two of them, panting shakily against Cartman's lips. It took Cartman only a fraction of a second before he felt his body resign to the tight, hot heat in the pit of his stomach as well and he let out a long groan into Kyle's mouth as he spilled over inside of him.

After that, Kyle collapsed onto Cartman's front, breathing out heavily against his salty skin. Cartman leaned back into the pillows, taking Kyle with him, wrapping his arms around his middle, holding him firmly to him. He kissed the top of his head.

They laid there quietly for a while, just listening to the other breathe in the post-sex stillness. Eventually, Kyle spoke.

"I love you."

Cartman made a contented sound and held Kyle just a little bit tighter.

"I love you too."

And, then, at least while they were together, things would be okay for a little while longer.

Hate to Say I Told You So

Kyle had drifted off into his stasis-like vampire sleep shortly after Cartman did. They were both still sweaty and sticky but nestled together so closely that neither of them had wanted to move. It was soft and comfortable and warm and Kyle, for the first time in a long time, felt safe.

In fact, he had been so comfortable, that he didn't hear Cartman's phone vibrate loudly with a phone call on the nightstand. Neither did Cartman, it seemed, because he didn't stir either. It buzzed again several times in succession until Kyle was finally roused from his slumber and elbowed Cartman in the side to wake him up too

"Answer your phone," Kyle murmured groggily. He rolled over and covered his head with a pillow to block out the thin rays of sun that broke through the window blinds and lay across the bed in streaks of light.

Cartman made a sleepy sound of annoyance but propped himself up on one elbow, blinking the sleep from his eyes as he reached over and grabbed his phone to check the caller ID. He froze, staring at the screen for a second.

"For fuck's sake," he said under his breath.

Kyle took the pillow off of his face and glanced over at him. He could see the way his eyebrows were drawn together and his lips were pulled into a tight frown.

"What is it?"

Cartman's eyes darted over to Kyle. He looked a little worried. "It's Stan."

Kyle sat up fully then. He felt a little bit sick. He *had* just confessed everything to Stan in the park the night before. He hadn't quite gotten around to breaking that news to Cartman yet, either. "What!? Why the fuck would he be calling you!?"

"The hell if I know!" Cartman exclaimed.

"Are you going to answer it?" Kyle pressed.

"No," said Cartman, hitting the decline call button and setting his phone down next to him on the sheets. He rolled over onto his side to face Kyle. "There's not a single thing that Stan Marsh could say to me right now that would make me get out of this bed. As far as I'm concerned, we live here now. Me and you. At least, that's where I plan on keeping you." He raised his eyebrows suggestively.

Kyle, although a little panicked about the situation, managed to give Cartman a sarcastic little grin. "What a charmer," he said. Regardless, he laid back down, scooted closer, and kissed him lazily.

Cartman's phone rang again. Cartman rolled his eyes and pushed it off the bed and onto the floor.

"Jesus, Stan, give it a rest," he muttered.

The phone ceased and then it rang again.

Kyle pulled himself back up into a seated position and frowned at Cartman. "Maybe you should answer it. Just to see what he wants. It might be important."

Cartman groaned loudly. "But Kyyyyyyyle, he probably just wants to bitch me out for 'murdering' your ass again." He stopped and gave a wry smirk. "Though, I do take full responsibility for murdering your *ass*. Get it? Because-

"I got it," Kyle said, dryly.

The phone rang again and Kyle gave Cartman an expectant look.

"Either you answer it or I will," he said.

Cartman huffed. "Fiiiine," he said. He reached down and picked his phone up off the floor, putting it up to his ear. "What do you want, Marsh?"

"Put Kyle on the phone," Stan said, bluntly.

Cartman glanced at Kyle, narrowing his eyes. "How do you even know he's here?"

"Because he told me."

"OH, HE DID, DID HE!?" Cartman basically shouted, looking over at Kyle with a scowl.

Kyle shrugged sheepishly.

"Yeah. He did," said Stan. *"I need to talk to him, Cartman. Please."*

"No! Fuck you!" said Cartman. "I don't do favors for people who wrongfully accuse me of murdering my friends!"

Kyle scoffed and reached over, taking the phone from Cartman.

"What is it, Stan?" Kyle accosted.

"Oh, god, Kyle, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to do this, I swear! I was just mad and upset and I wasn't thinking!" Stan started, nearly sobbing on the other line.

Kyle immediately became wary, speaking slowly. "What do you mean? What did you do?"

Stan sniffled pitifully. *"I went to the police about you and Cartman."*

Kyle's eyes flashed and his lips pulled back into a snarl, involuntarily. "You WHAT!? Stan, how could you!? How could you fucking do this to me!?" he exclaimed.

Cartman leaned in to try and hear what Stan was talking about, quirking an eyebrow at Kyle.

"I'm sorry!" Stan pleaded desperately. *"I'm so fucking sorry!"*

Kyle's breathing was fast and heavy and he ran a hand through his hair, trying to get a grasp of what was happening and what this meant for his life now. "What did you tell them, exactly?" he asked in a low, trembling voice.

"Not everything, I promise. I just told them about the two guys from Denver. I didn't say anything about the pedophile ring or the preacher guy, I swear!" Stan said, his tone pleading. *"They don't know where you're staying, they just know what you look like and Cartman's license plate number."*

"Why?" Kyle asked after a second, his voice breaking just a little. "Why would you do that?"

On the other end of the line, Stan was quiet. *"I didn't want you to get caught, I just... I wanted you to think about what you were doing. I wanted you to realize that there are consequences to your actions,"* he said, finally. *"But I regretted it as soon as I left the police station! S-So I wanted to give you a heads up so you can get ahead of this before it becomes a problem."*

"Before it becomes a problem!?" shouted Kyle. "Stan, it's already a problem! It became a problem the second you opened your mouth about it! No, you know what!? It became a problem the second you followed us to Washington! Or maybe it's my fault and it became a problem the second I was stupid enough to trust you!"

"Kyle..." Stan sobbed.

"No! Don't you fucking "Kyle" me, Stan! I'm done! I was done last night and I'm definitely done now!" Kyle paused, considering his words, his chest heaving with heavy, frantic breaths. When he spoke next, his voice was barely above a whisper, quavering and on the verge of collapsing in on itself.

"I hate you. Don't ever try to talk to me again, Stan." He paused to sniffle a little, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath to try and compose himself. "I hate you. I *hate* you! I never want to talk to you again. I never want to see you, I never want to think about you. You ruined everything. You're dead to me. I should have killed you when I had the chance."

Stan made a horrible sound in his throat, like his heart was breaking into a million pieces and Kyle was crushing them into dust with his heel, like broken glass on a concrete floor.

It was harsh and Kyle probably didn't mean any of it but he was incredibly upset. Stan had just turned on him completely and put a huge hitch in his plans, putting himself, but more importantly, Cartman, in danger.

Kyle exhaled loudly into the phone, his breath still catching on the lump in his throat. "Just fuck off."

With that, despite Stan blubbering on the other line, Kyle hung up, tossing the phone down on the bed. He clasped his hand around the bridge of his nose, his eyes closed, and breathed deeply, trying to calm himself down and will the tears back into his eyes so he could discuss this with Cartman and figure out what to do next.

Cartman, however, did not seem to have any sympathy for him in this moment. In fact, he was scowling fiercely, watching Kyle with intense eyes.

“You told Stan? Again?” he said in a bitter, accusatory tone.

Kyle glanced up at him out of the corner of his eye. “Yeah.”

“Are you fucking dumb!?” Cartman snapped, getting up off the bed, grabbing a used shirt off of the floor and tugging it on over his head as they both began to get dressed. They had to start getting ready to go and they both knew it. They had to find somewhere new to go; someplace to lay low and probably ditch Cartman’s truck to avoid suspicion.

“I guess so!” Kyle exclaimed. “I trusted him. I *wanted* to trust him.”

“You shouldn’t have.”

“I know! I know I shouldn’t have, I just thought that...”

“That he would listen to you and have some kind of grand epiphany, finally understanding everything and accepting it, and then you and him could go live together in some gay-ass little fairy tale where nobody ever gets hurt and everything is all sparkles and rainbows and super best friends forever!? Is that it!?” Cartman mocked.

Kyle’s lip curled up and he scowled at him, his eyes flashing bright green. “You know what!? Fuck you!”

“Yeah, sure! Fuck me! Fuck me, Kyle! Fuck me when I’m the one who does everything for you and you can’t even keep your mouth shut to Stan for one fucking day!” Cartman shook his head, shoving things haphazardly into a suitcase, turning away from Kyle so that he couldn’t see the blazing redness in his cheeks or the way his nose scrunched up with anger. He punched the clothes down with far more aggression than necessary to try and get them to fit before he zipped it up and grabbed another duffle bag to repack.

He grit his teeth and slumped his shoulders a bit.

“Maybe you were stupid enough to trust Stan but *I* was stupid enough to trust *you*,” he said, sourly.

Kyle turned and ripped the motel’s digital alarm clock right out of the wall, electrical socket and everything. He wheeled back as if he wanted to throw it at Cartman but seemed to change his mind at the last second and he crushed it in his hands, throwing the broken clump of circuitry at the wall just over Cartman’s head instead, where it broke into smithereens. He took a couple of angry, fuming breaths, his shoulder rising and falling heavily as he glared at

Cartman. Then, he grabbed a lamp off of the nightstand as well and flung that at the wall next to Cartman too and it shattered and clattered to the floor.

Cartman slowly turned to look at Kyle, his expression seeming almost bored now, like he was unimpressed with Kyle's show of force.

"You missed," he said.

Quickly, Kyle turned again and grabbed the resident bible out of the bedside drawer and flung it at Cartman directly this time, hitting him right in the middle of the forehead.

"Ow! You bitch!" Cartman shouted, bringing his hand up to gingerly touch his head.

"You're such a fucking asshole!" Kyle exclaimed, turning and starting to throw his own clothes and books and toiletries into his backpack.

"We're going to get fucking arrested because of *you* and *I'm* the asshole!?" Cartman scoffed incredulously.

"Yes!" Kyle yelled. He didn't elaborate on why. Instead, he turned and kept packing in silence. Heavy, distressed silence. Much like how Cartman had turned away so that Kyle wouldn't see his unchecked anger, Kyle kept himself turned away so that Cartman wouldn't see the hot tears in his eyes and the few that rolled down his cheeks and off his nose and chin. He hastily wiped them away and turned to sling his backpack over his shoulders and, when he did, Cartman was right there in front of him.

"It *was* really, really stupid," Cartman said, softer this time. "Telling Stan."

"Yeah," said Kyle, not looking up at him.

Cartman tilted Kyle's chin up with his finger. "Just because you're stupid and an asshole and we're going to get arrested because of you, it doesn't mean I don't still love you," he said.

Kyle narrowed his eyes. "...Thanks."

"What!? I'm trying to be sincere here!"

"I know. You're just..." Kyle shook his head. "I love you too, even though you're a piece of shit sometimes. We've been over this." He pushed past Cartman, looking around the room to make sure they had gathered up every last bit of their belongings, leaving no trace or paper trail behind. He turned back to him, crossing his arms anxiously. "What do we do now? Where do we go?"

"I don't know," Cartman admitted.

"Canada?" Kyle suggested.

Cartman gave a noisy exhale and then nodded. "Canada works."

Kyle opened his mouth to say something else but he was interrupted by the motel door swinging open. He took a defensive stance, prepared for anything. SWAT teams, police, Stan... But, what it really had been was just Kenny. Kenny waltzing in all chipper and ready to hang out with his best buds.

“Hey dudes. What’s up?”

Kyle frowned apologetically, shutting the door behind Kenny. “Oh, Kenny... We’ve gotta go.”

Kenny quirked an eyebrow. “Go where?”

“Canada, apparently,” Cartman said. “Kyle spilled his guts to Stan and then he ratted us out to the cops like bitch.”

“Shit,” said Kenny. He chewed on his thumbnail. “So... That means you guys are out of here for good, then?”

Cartman wrapped his arms around Kenny’s shoulders, enveloping him in a tight hug. He wasn’t sure if he was ever going to see Kenny again, truthfully, and that broke his heart a little bit inside. Kenny was like a brother to him and he didn’t want to leave him behind. At the same time, there’s no way he would ever bring him along and put him in danger. Kenny had other people to look after, himself.

“Yeah,” he said. “I’ll hit you up somehow when we get settled there and... I don’t know.” He pulled back from the embrace, keeping his hands on Kenny’s shoulders. “You don’t gotta worry about anything, Kenny. I’ll get ahold of you and then, if you need anything, I’ve got you covered, alright? You and Karen. I can wire you cash or I can-”

Kenny nodded, smiling a little sadly as he cut him off. “Thanks, Eric. Love you, man.”

“Love you too, Ken,” Cartman said. He turned and grabbed his bags, hoisting them up on his shoulder.

Kenny gave Kyle a hug next, burying his face in the crook of his neck for a second, then eases up on him, giving him a sincere look.

“Keep an eye on him, okay?” Kenny said.

Kyle nodded. “I will.”

Kenny grinned and winked at him. “Keep being bad ass, too.”

Kyle snorted. “Thanks. I’ll try.”

Cartman walked out into the parking lot and tossed their things in the bed of his truck, then got into the drivers seat, starting the engine and waiting for Kyle to say his final goodbye to Kenny. When he did, he got in and Cartman pulled out, back onto the road.

Kyle sighed, once they got going, putting on his sunglasses and flipping up his hood. The day was overcast but the sun was still bright behind the clouds. He rested his head against the window.

“I’m sorry,” he said finally. “I’m sorry that I fucked everything up and told Stan.”

Cartman glanced at him out of the corner of his eye as he took an exit out of the city, heading for the highway. “I get why you did. I wish Stan wasn’t an asshole too. But he kind of is these days. Nothing we can do about that now. We just gotta get the fuck out of Seattle and we’ll be good.”

“Yeah,” Kyle said. He closed his eyes and thumped his forehead against the dashboard, trying to clear his head a little. They had a long way to go and there was so much on his mind. Even Cartman was quiet and pensive as he drove, keeping his eyes on the road and his brow furrowed and serious. Kyle watched him, not directly, but peripherally. The idea that he might have put him in danger by trusting Stan made him feel sick. He wasn’t used to caring about somebody like this, especially not Cartman, and he wasn’t sure he ever would be. Loving a human was terrifying. They were fragile and fleeting and temporary in the universe and Kyle didn’t want Cartman to be any of those things. He wished he was as strong as he was, as impervious and everlasting. He knew exactly what he was going to have to do when they got to where they were going. He didn’t like the concept at all but he felt like there wasn’t much of an option anymore. Not if he was going to keep loving him, and he planned to. He wanted to play this sick, twisted game for the rest of eternity. Or, at the very least, for a very, very long time.

Then, as Kyle slouched in his seat, contemplating the future and the things he would do when they reached Canada, a shrill and horrible sound pierced his super-sensitive ears and he sat up, his eyes wide and fearful.

Sirens.

Game over.

Bleeding Out

“Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck! Goddammit! Motherfucker!” Cartman cursed consistently as he pressed his foot down hard on the gas pedal. His truck’s engine complained loudly but, still, it sped up as Cartman weaved through traffic on the highway.

Kyle had turned almost completely to look over the seats and out the rear view window, watching the flashing red and blue lights start to gain on them from behind. His mind was racing at a thousand miles per hour but he still couldn’t come up with any sort of plan for how to get out of this mess.

“What do we do!?” he asked Cartman, not really expecting an answer.

“I don’t fucking know! I’m just driving, dude!” Cartman said, his voice shooting up an octave.

“J-Just pull over and I’ll compel them into thinking they’ve got the wrong people,” Kyle brainstormed. “That could work. Right?”

“No fucking way am I pulling over!” Cartman yelled. “There’s for sure going to be too many guys for you to take at once and if they have cameras that’s just not gonna work! There’s enough evidence in this truck alone for them to justify putting us away for the rest of our lives. Not that that matters for YOU but *I’ve* been to Juvie and I don’t do good in captivity!” He sounded like he was really starting to panic but he didn’t take his eyes off the road.

Kyle pushed his hair back with both hands, looking frantic. He worried about Cartman and he worried about himself. He didn’t know what would happen to him if he went to prison. He wasn’t sure he’d be able to conceal his vampirism under those scrutinizing eyes and he didn’t want to have to go through the hassle of breaking the both of them out.

He sucked in a sharp breath through his teeth. “Okay. Okay. Just keep driving then. Try to lose them and, if we can’t, I’ll...I’ll think of something...”

Cartman nodded, finally looking over at Kyle for just a fraction of a second before turning his eyes back to the road. “Alright. Lucky for you I’m a really good driver.”

He was and Kyle didn’t know how he hadn’t noticed it before. Especially in stressful situations like this, Cartman was a natural. He made decisions quickly and without hesitation and that helped tremendously when they were flying down the interstate at ninety miles per hour.

Kyle pulled his feet up onto the seat, tucking his knees up to his chest and resting his head against them as he prayed silently for a miracle. It all watered down to praying for Cartman’s safety, though, really. He didn’t care what happened to himself. Not now. He could handle it. Just the thought of Cartman getting hurt over this was heart wrenching and made him feel sick to his stomach.

After a minute, he looked up, looking over at Cartman, watching his tense, focused face as he peered out the windshield. In the rear view mirror, the flashing lights had disappeared but the sound of sirens still blared faintly in the distance.

“We’re losing them,” Kyle observed.

“No, we’re not,” Cartman said through gritted teeth. “They’re gonna cut us off with a roadblock, I just know it.”

“Then take an exit or something,” said Kyle.

“It’ll be before the next exit,” Cartman said, his voice sounding low and even. “They’re still behind us so we can’t turn around either.”

“How do you know that they’ll do that?”

Cartman gave Kyle a quick look. “This isn’t my first time doing illegal shit, it’s just the first time that I’m for sure going to get caught.”

“We’re *not* going to get caught,” Kyle insisted, sounding like he was trying to convince himself more than anything.

Cartman made an unsure sound in his throat but he looked determined. “Maybe not, if I can get through this,” he said, nodding towards the road. About a mile ahead, like Cartman had predicted, there was a road block, with traffic cones, barricades, and two police cars parked end to end, blocking off traffic. Police were all around, standing along the sides of the road with their pistols drawn.

Kyle gulped. “Do you think you can do it?” he asked, glancing over at Cartman, looking worried and slumping down a little in the passenger’s seat.

Cartman was quiet for just a second before he slammed the gas pedal down as much as it could go, his knuckles white on the steering wheel. There was a glimmer of excitement in his eyes now, not just fear. He lived for an adrenaline rush and this was perfect for him.

“Hell yeah, I can.”

The truck gained on the blockade at full speed, the smell of burning rubber wafting in through the open windows. Cartman gave Kyle one last look.

“Hold on to your balls, Jew, we’re making this happen,” he said in a gruff voice.

Kyle had to grin just a little. He felt like they were Bonnie and Clyde, themselves against the world. If this was how they were going to go out, well, that would probably be okay.

“STOP AND GET OUT OF THE VEHICLE WITH YOUR HANDS UP,” a police officer shouted through a megaphone. When the truck didn’t slow down, all the other officers with their guns drawn took aim. And, when Cartman slammed right through the middle of the blockade, knocking the police cars out of the way and mowing down wooden barricades with the sound of crushing metal, they fired.

Kyle screamed his head off, ducking down under the dashboard as the deafening hail of gunfire rattled through the cab of the truck, sending broken glass flying everywhere, but Cartman just screeched with manic laughter the whole time.

They made it through, though. The police obviously didn't think that through well enough so the road ahead was clear and unobstructed, providing them an easy escape route.

Kyle sat up and looked around in disbelief. "We did it?"

"Ha. Yeah," Cartman panted, his face a little white now, but a cocky grin still plastered on his face. He had a deep gash on his face from a stray shard of glass or a piece of shrapnel but he didn't stop to wipe the blood away as it dripped down his face. He gave Kyle another look. "You hurt?"

Kyle shook his head. "No, I'm fine." He frowned at Cartman's injury. "Your face got cut," he said.

"Doesn't matter," said Cartman. They had gotten a decent ways away by now and Cartman veered towards the side of the road, pulling down off of the highway and into a patch of bramble that concealed a patch of lush woodland. He coughed a little and winced.

"What are you-" Kyle started but then he took in a breath that he didn't know he had been holding and he smelled blood. At first he thought that it was just from the superficial cut on Cartman's face but it was far too strong for that. He knew the smell. This was arterial blood. And a lot of it.

He looked at Cartman, horrified, his eyes wide, the smell of the blood dilating his pupils so that they nearly eclipsed his irises. "Eric..."

Cartman met his gaze and frowned tightly. "It's nothing," he said, his voice sounding weaker and wavering more than it did a second ago, though. "I'm fine."

He sat up to get out of the truck and the driver's seat was stained dark red.

"Eric!" Kyle exclaimed, loudly this time, jumping out of his side of the truck, running to the other side as Cartman holds onto the door to steady himself. "Get back in the truck! You got shot, didn't you?! I've gotta take you to the hospital!"

"I'm fine!" Cartman insisted again, his arm wrapped around his middle. He slammed the door and grabbed his duffle bag out of the back. "We've gotta ditch the truck. Too... Ugh... Too conspicuous."

He looked pale and nauseous, starting to break into a cold sweat, but he urged Kyle on, tugging him into the woods.

"You are not fine!" Kyle shouted, running after him, his backpack slung over his shoulder, trying to get him to slow down. The smell of blood was making his throat burn like fire but the implications were awful. "Cartman! Stop!"

“We’ve gotta go, we’ve gotta...” He trailed off, leaning against a tree. He took his hand away from his side and it was covered in warm, red blood. He really looked like he might pass out and he slid down the tree until he was sitting in the grass. “Shit.”

Kyle kneeled down next to him, frantically, tears stinging his eyes as the shock of everything begins to wear off and it really starts to hit him that Cartman was bleeding out in front of him right now. He pulled his shirt away from the wound. It was bullet hole, alright, right between two of his ribs on his left side, small and perfectly round but it gushed blood, soaking his clothes. Kyle put pressure down on the wound with his hands, the blood still seeping between his fingers. His eyes darted up to Cartman’s face in horror and disbelief.

Cartman closed his eyes and gave a weak laugh. “I guess this is it, then.”

“No,” Kyle said, basically begging. “No. Please... Cartman...” His voice trembled and broke. “Don’t do this. Not to me. Not like this.”

Cartman made a small, contorted grimace, making a sound of discontent in his throat. He opened his eyes for just a second, glossy with tears as well, to give Kyle a mournful glance. His breathing was beginning to seem more and more labored as his abdomen and chest cavity filled up with blood. He coughed again and it was wet and slushy sounding, redness staining his lips. Kyle wiped it away with his thumb, swiping gently across his bottom lip.

“Fucking weak,” Cartman griped, closing his eyes again and leaning his head back against the rough tree bark. “This is *not* how I wanted to die.”

“Shut the fuck up,” Kyle said, sniffing. “Shut up. You’re going to be okay. I’m gonna...” He stopped because he knew exactly what he was going to have to do. He took a deep breath in and exhaled it in a shaky whoosh. “I’m going to turn you...”

Cartman’s eyes snapped open. “Like... Into a vampire?”

Kyle hesitated but nodded. “Yes. Because, if I don’t, you’re going to die and I can’t...” His voice broke as he trailed off, his words morphing into a sob. His hands grasped onto Cartman’s shirt and he nuzzled into the crook of his neck as he cried.

Cartman weakly brought his arm up around Kyle’s back, leaving bloodstains on the back of his hoodie where he touched him.

Kyle pulled back and wiped his nose on his sleeve. “Okay, let me just-”

He cut himself off, though, when his vampire hearing picked up the sound of twigs snapping underfoot. Someone was treading through the thicket with fast, heavy steps. Kyle sucked in a short breath and stood up quickly, once again expecting the worst. He braced himself and blocked Cartman with his body, his eyes lighting up a little bit, almost like an aposematic warning to potential threats.

He heard the squawk and static of a police radio and Kyle felt for sure like they were caught now.

But it wasn't the police.

Once again, it was Stan.

He looked frantic and his chest heaved as he tried to catch his breath. In his hand, he held a small police radio. He looked like shit, disheveled and tired with bloodshot eyes. He looked desperately to Kyle.

"Stan!?" Kyle exclaimed in disbelief. He wanted to be angry with him but he was too stunned by his appearance to be mad. "W-What are you doing here!?"

Stan took a tentative step forward, gesturing to his radio. "I followed you. I wanted to help. I..." He looked down at Cartman, his eyes apologetic. "Give me your keys."

"Fuck you, Marsh!" Cartman managed through raspy breaths, struggling to get enough air to project his insults. "Fucking. Rat. Bastard."

"Why?" Kyle asked, still incredulous that Stan was even there to begin with.

"I'll distract the cops. I'm gonna lead them somewhere else and... and when they catch me, I'll tell them I was lying or something," said Stan. He pushed back his messy black hair with both hands, resting his palms on his forehead as he let out a loud exhale. "I'm sorry and I just want to help you get away because this is all my fault."

Kyle dropped back down next to Cartman, reaching in and fishing his keys out of his pants pocket. He paused, still looking desperate and worried, to gently brush a sweaty piece of hair out of Cartman's eyes. He stood up again and stepped over to Stan so that they were standing very close and facing each other. He dropped the keys into Stan's open hand.

Stan looked at Kyle, his ocean blue eyes teary and remorseful. "Kyle, I'm so sorry," he said.

"I know," said Kyle, trying to look stern with his lips pursed but he couldn't keep his eyebrows from twitching into a worried frown.

Stan glanced to Cartman, who had closed his eyes again, fighting through heavy breaths as his skin continued to pale, then back to Kyle. "Is he going to be okay or are you going to-"

"Yeah," Kyle cut him off. "I am."

He was quiet for a few seconds before speaking again, stating the obvious but in a way he never really had before. "I love him, Stan."

Stan nodded. "I know."

Kyle looked over his shoulder at Cartman, who hadn't seemed to notice that he was the subject of the conversation. He watched him for a second, taking note of the way his chest rose and fell with his staggered breathing.

"I should go," Stan said with finality. "You need to heal him and I need to make sure you don't get caught." He turned to leave but Kyle caught him by the shoulder.

“Wait,” he said, turning him around quickly. He hesitated again for just a second before he pulled Stan into a tight hug, pressing his face into the crook of his neck to mask the way tears fell from his eyes then. Stan hugged him back, bunching up his hands in the back of Kyle’s shirt, like he didn’t want to let him go.

“Thank you,” Kyle said in a small whisper.

“You’re always going to be my best friend,” Stan said, his voice breaking a little.

“You’re always going to be my best friend too,” said Kyle.

Stan pulled away from the hug and took Kyle’s hand, giving it a firm squeeze, forcing a smile through his tears.

“Good luck,” he said.

“You too,” said Kyle. He tried to swallow down a sob. “Goodbye, Stan.”

“Goodbye, Kyle,” said Stan.

He let go of his hand and that was that. Kyle watched Stan turn and jog through the underbrush, back towards the road and the truck that they would never drive again.

Then, Kyle was able to turn his attention to Cartman once again, kneeling down in the dirt next to him.

“Okay,” Kyle said, sniffing just a little. “Okay. Um.”

He rolled up his sleeve and bit hard into his own wrist until blood began to trickle out of the wound. Vampire blood was darker than human blood and it tasted slightly more bitter but it flowed the same. He held it to Cartman’s lips.

“You have to drink this.”

Cartman opened one eye to look at him and then suspiciously at Kyle’s wrist. “Are you sure?”

“Yes, I’m sure!”

“Fine,” Cartman said, hesitantly pressing his mouth to the wound. He scrunched up his face and tried to pull away but Kyle held his head there for a second until he was sure he had gotten enough.

“There,” Kyle said, taking his wrist back and rolling his sleeve back down.

Cartman stuck out his tongue, Kyle’s blood smudged on his lips. “Sick, dude,” he said.

Kyle exhaled half a laugh. “Shut up. You’d better get used to drinking blood.” He adjusted himself on his knees and reached over, pulling down the collar of Cartman’s shirt.

“My turn,” he said. Then, he sunk his teeth into Cartman’s neck, drawing just a few mouthfuls of his sweet, rich blood into his own mouth. He didn’t want to take too much since Cartman was already low, even though he was going to have to die anyhow.

“So, now what?” Cartman asked, struggling to keep his eyes open now.

“You have to die,” Kyle said. It was almost irrational how much that hurt, despite the fact that, if this was done correctly, he would be coming right back. And Kyle hoped to god that he had done this correctly.

“Weak,” Cartman said, well, weakly.

Kyle hesitated. “Do you... Do you want to let nature take it’s course or do you want me to-” he swallowed, “-speed up the process...”

“Well...” Cartman rasped, “bleeding out fucking sucks. So far. So...” He opened his eyes and they were almost pleading.

Kyle nodded, understanding. “Right. Okay. Um.”

He couldn’t believe he was about to kill the man he loved right now and he was finding it incredibly difficult to even know where to start. He bit down on his lip hard, hating how tears wanted to come because of this.

“Sorry,” Kyle said, turning away for a second to wipe his eyes. “Sorry, I’m trying, I just...”

“It’s okay. Jew,” said Cartman. The corners of his mouth twitched, almost into a smirk, but his eyes were wet as well. “I love. You.”

“I love you, too.”

Kyle leaned in to kiss him, bringing his hands up to cup his face as he did. He kissed him hard and with everything he had in him. And, before he pulled away, he twisted his arms quickly and snapped Cartman’s neck, killing him instantly.

Kyle fell back onto his ass on the dirt with a sob, hating the horrible sound of Cartman’s bones breaking and the way it felt in his hands. He began to hyperventilate a little bit, almost horrified at what he had done, looking at Cartman’s lifeless body with wide eyes as tears ran down his cheeks. He got back up on his knees and the all but collapsed onto Cartman’s chest, holding tightly onto him, and sobbing against his shirt.

It was a terrible thing to witness, Eric Cartman without the light inside of him. Kyle hated how his chest was still, even though his face was peaceful in death. And it felt like this stage lasted forever. Kyle didn’t remember much of his own brief death, months ago, but it felt like it had only lasted several seconds. Watching it as a spectator, it seemed to take hours, despite only being a few short minutes.

Very soon, with his head against Cartman’s chest as he cried, Kyle heard a very faint heartbeat and he sat up and gasped, scouring Cartman’s face for any sign of life. He touched desperately at his face, patting it lightly.

“Cartman!? Cartman, wake up!”

After a few more seconds, Cartman groaned a little, wrinkling his nose. His eyelids fluttered and then opened and he blinked a few times, then looked over at Kyle. He grinned slightly, almost in disbelief.

“Oh, sweet,” he said. He touched his abdomen and his bleeding had already completely stopped, the bullet hole healing itself rapidly.

Kyle laughed tearfully and then pounced on him in another tight hug. Then, he pulled back and kissed him again and again and again until Cartman laughed as well.

“Jeez, Jew,” said Cartman. “It’s not like I *died* or anything.”

“Shut up!” Kyle exclaimed, punching him not-so-lightly in the arm. He stood and reached out his hand for him. “Alright, get up. We’ve gotta go.”

“Right, right,” said Cartman unsteadily hauling himself to his feet. He was still in quite a bit of pain but he wasn’t dead or dying so that’s all that really mattered.

Kyle took his hand and they ran off into the woods together.

'Til Eternity

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Cartman woke up in a strange bed with soft pillows and a thick blanket. He blinked, staring up at the ceiling. The smoke detector blinked in time with his breathing. Slow and even. He didn't know where he was but it seemed generic enough. He could tell it was day outside, even though the only light in the room came from where it seeped through the curtains drawn closed on the tall windows.

The place smelled funny in a way that he couldn't place, but he could also smell Kyle. He didn't know how he knew how much about what Kyle *smelled* like but it was undeniably him. Warm and sweet, like an autumn day. He sat up.

"You're awake," Kyle observed aloud from nearby. Cartman turned his head and saw him sitting in an arm chair by the window, just watching.

Cartman idly scratched at his bare chest. He had been stripped of his bloody clothes, all the way down to his boxers. He didn't remember that at all. In fact, he didn't remember much from after Kyle had turned him and then dragged him through the woods on the outskirts of Seattle.

"Oh, hey. How long was I out?"

"Almost four days," Kyle said with a shrug, standing and making his way across the room, sitting down on the side of the bed. "I compelled you to sleep. The vampire transformation kind of sucked ass for me and I didn't want you to have to go through that. And I didn't want to put up with you bitching about it the whole time." He grinned, his fangs flashing.

"So, I'm...?" Cartman asked vaguely.

"Should be," said Kyle. "You look sufficiently dead to me."

"Do I?" Cartman asked. He touched his mouth and found his own fangs there. They seemed thicker than Kyle's and not quite so needle-like but they were sharp. His neck felt a little stiff and he attributed that to Kyle snapping his spine earlier in the week. He wasn't sure how he felt, actually. He wasn't sure how a new vampire *should* feel. Though, he was hungry. Hungrier than he usually was, for sure. He wasn't sure how Kyle hadn't complained about that the entire time before he got a taste for human blood. The hunger was gnawing and vacuous.

"I'm fucking starving," he said. "Where the hell are we?"

"Canada. At a hotel. I may have spent a little more than we usually do on places we stay this time. I wouldn't worry about finances, though. I've kind of been draining the bank accounts

of the people we kill so we've got funds," said Kyle, leaning back on his hands, still watching Cartman curiously. "I figured you'd be hungry. I have something for you."

He got up and walked over to the room's mini fridge, taking out a flat, red, plastic bag. "Here," he said, tossing it to Cartman.

Cartman caught it and stared down at it in his hands. It was a blood bag from the Vancouver General Hospital. O Negative.

"How did you even get this?" Cartman asked, quirking an eyebrow up at Kyle.

Kyle shrugged with his hands on his hips. "Somebody once told me that hospitals were ridiculously easy to steal from." He smirked. "Who else could possibly even need it? The gay-ass injured people?"

Cartman broke into a toothy grin. "That's my Jew."

"Don't thank me until you try it, though," said Kyle. "I'm telling you that they fucking suck. I had to go out and kill somebody by myself while you were passed out because there's no way in hell I'm drinking those." He made a face. "But you go right ahead."

Cartman looked down at it again, squeezing it gently in his hands. He was reminded of how hungry he was and decided to give it a shot at least. He tore open the tubing with his teeth and sucked on it like a straw, drawing some of the thick, burgundy liquid into his mouth.

It didn't taste like he expected. He knew what blood tasted like. He had been punched in the mouth enough throughout his life to get a sample or two here and there. But this was different. It was salty and surprisingly sweet and coated his tongue in velvety richness. However, Kyle was right in that the blood bags weren't that great and the texture was kind of gross. Nevertheless, Cartman was so hungry and thirsty that he drained it quickly. He looked back up at Kyle, his eyes glowing slightly now, his blue eye vivid and icy and his brown eye a smoldering red.

"It's not terrible," Cartman said.

"You haven't had it straight from the tap yet, though," said Kyle, tossing him another. He looked intrigued at how Cartman's eyes lit up like his did now. "It'll change your life."

"Too bad I can't repay the favor and drink yours, huh?" Cartman said with a smirk as he tore into the second bag.

Kyle rubbed the back of his neck, sheepishly. "Actually, I did learn some more stuff about our particular condition," he said. "I got back in touch with Diego. It was an arduous process but we talked for a while the other day."

"Why?"

"I wanted to make sure I knew everything I could," said Kyle. He seemed almost pensive and he bit his lip as he looked away slightly. "I wanted to make sure that I could take care of you while you were changing. Not that you need me to."

“And? What did he say?” asked Cartman from between long sips of cold blood.

Kyle looked like he might blush if he could. “Well, first of all, a vampire drinking from a human regularly and not killing them is like... an intimate thing. Did you know that vampire venom is an analgesic and an aphrodisiac?”

“An aphrodisiac!?” Cartman yelped. “So *that’s* why I kept getting a boner when you drank my blood. Every time you bit me I just wanted to fuck you.” He shrugged.

“Yeah, that’s kind of the point,” said Kyle. “Vampires do tend to sleep with their victims. Even if they don’t, the aphrodisiac aids in compliance.”

“Oh, so you were luring me in, I see,” Cartman said, raising his eyebrows suggestively. “A predator-prey relationship.”

“Shut up,” said Kyle. “If I would have known that back then, there’s no way I would have been drinking your blood.”

“Sure you would have,” said Cartman. “You know you were into me, even back then.”

Kyle sat back down on the corner of the bed, his lips pursed. “Yeah, whatever you have to tell yourself to sleep at night.”

Cartman laughed and wiped a smudge of blood off of the corner of his mouth with the back of his hand. “I don’t even *need* to sleep at night anymore. And don’t even bother playing hard to get now, Kyle. We’ve got that all out in the open. Now you’re stuck with me for the rest of eternity, so I hope you’re happy with your life choices.”

Kyle looked over at him, the ghost of a smirk playing on his lips. “I suppose I am. And, you know what? You probably would have gotten a boner when I bit you, even if there wasn’t an aphrodisiac involved, Mr. I-Liked-You-For-Years.”

Cartman sat the empty blood bag down on the nightstand, ignoring how it still leaked slightly, bleeding onto the lace covering. “You think you’re real funny, huh?”

“I think I’m hilarious,” said Kyle, leaning towards him a little.

“Cheeky Jew.”

Cartman grabbed Kyle’s face and ran his thumb across his lips, pulling him closer. He was quiet for a minute, just looking at him, his eyes, his mouth, his hands. He swallowed. “You saved me.”

“I know.”

Cartman frowned suddenly, his hands wandering down to Kyle’s waist. “Did you hear anything about what happened with Stan?”

Kyle shook his head, seeming sad. “No. There’s been nothing on the news but I called him once from a payphone and he didn’t answer.”

Cartman nodded. "Alright. He kind of showed up for us there at the end, even though it was all his fault entirely. But, you know. That's Marsh for ya."

"Yeah," said Kyle. He scooted up to the top of the bed, reclining against the mountain of pillows there. Cartman laid down next to him and Kyle rolled over to face him. "You're going to need to test out your vampire powers."

"Yeah? You excited? You think it's going to be really hot, don't you?" Cartman teased, running his hand down Kyle's side.

Kyle snorted. "Sure. It might be hot to see you tear someone apart."

"God, I can't wait," Cartman said. He traced his fingers along the faint pink scar on Kyle's neck where Diego had bitten him. "I kinda wish you were human so I could bite you. I bet you'd like it. I bet it'd make your little kosher cock twitch."

Kyle glared at him. "First of all, it's not little. Fuck you. Secondly, that's another thing Diego told me about. Vampires *can* feed off of each other but it's like... a vampire sex act."

"For real?" asked Cartman.

"I guess so. I guess sharing each other's blood is traditionally how vampires form a romantic bond or something," Kyle explained.

"Oh, sweet. Can we try it?" Cartman asked, seeming pleased with this information.

Kyle raised an eyebrow. "Right now? You don't want to, like, test out your newfound superhuman strength or anything first?"

Cartman leaned over top of Kyle, one hand on either side of him. He grinned down at him with a sharp, voracious grin. "Kyle, there is nothing I want to do more than fuck you. Ever. That's always top of the list."

Kyle blinked up at him, shrinking shyly inwards a little. "G-Gay ass," he muttered.

Cartman breathed a laugh. "Yeah, I'm a huge fucking fag," he said. He moved his head down quickly to kiss Kyle ardently on the lips. He slipped his tongue in his mouth, running it across his fangs and Kyle did the same to him.

Cartman's lips found their way to the corner of Kyle's mouth and then across his jaw and down to the soft, delicate skin of his neck. He could feel his pulse beneath his lips, usually slower than a humans but now hammering on, quick and even, like the beat of a butterfly's wings. He was slightly taken aback by how badly it made him salivate.

"Can I try?" Cartman murmured against Kyle's skin.

Kyle sucked in a sharp breath through his teeth, running his hands down Cartman's bare sides. He hesitated slightly but nodded. "Yeah."

Cartman hesitated too, unsure of how to go about doing this, really. He tilted his head one way and then the other until he got into a comfortably crooked position, pulling his lips back to graze against him gently before opening his mouth and sinking his teeth into the flesh there, latching onto him.

Kyle's blood tasted a hundred times better than the blood bags and better than when he had tasted it before when he was being turned. Cartman had to moan a little with his mouth still firmly pressed against his neck, surprised at the way it flowed onto his tongue.

This was entirely new for Kyle as well. As soon as Cartman's teeth pressed into him, he was hit with a rush of dopamine and adrenaline so strong that it nearly took his breath away. He rolled his eyes back a bit and ran his fingers up through Cartman's soft, brown hair as he drank from him, letting out a quiet cross between a gasp and a whimper. Almost involuntarily, he arched his back upwards, pressing his crotch against Cartman's. If this was how he had been making Cartman feel for the past few months whenever he did this, he almost envied him. It was nearly as good being bitten as it was to actually feed.

"Holy shit," Kyle panted, his grip tightening on Cartman's hair.

Cartman pulled back, his lips slightly parted and dripping dark crimson. His eyes shone brightly, casting blue and red light across his eyelashes, as he stared at Kyle, wide-eyed.

"Jesus Christ," he said.

Kyle nodded, incredulously. "Yeah."

Then, he leaned up on his elbows a bit, kissing along his neck this time, his teeth scraping lightly along the pale skin of his neck until he found the perfect place to pierce into him. He didn't pause to ask if Cartman wanted to be bitten. He already knew the answer. And, once again, vampire or not, Cartman's blood made Kyle feel absolutely euphoric.

It was Cartman's turn this time, to groan helplessly, pressing down against Kyle so much that he could feel his hard cock through their clothes. Granted, Cartman was just in his underwear. It didn't help that Cartman took it upon himself to clumsily undo Kyle's pants while he drank slowly from his neck.

Kyle let go, falling back against the pillows, his lips red and his eyes gleaming. He took in a short gasp and let it out in a heavy exhale, then he sat up halfway, just enough to press his lips to Cartman's, both their mouths still thick with blood, each other's mingling on their tongues.

"Fuck you for being so hot," Kyle mumbled as Cartman's hand gracelessly found it's way into Kyle's pants, squeezing his cock.

"Like that's *my* fault," Cartman said, smirking with cherry red lips.

"Shut up," said Kyle, pulling down the elastic of Cartman's boxer shorts. His cock sprung free and bobbed against his stomach. Kyle teased his fingers along the length of it, marveling at how it felt to be the same temperature as him again.

It seemed Cartman had the same thought on his mind because he let out a thoughtful hum as he ran his thumb back and forth over the leaking head of Kyle's cock. "You feel warm to me again."

"That's because you're cold too now," said Kyle.

"Good," Cartman said with a short nod. "Now you're not going to give my dick frostbite when I fuck you," he added.

Kyle glared at him, his eyes half-lidded. "I hate you."

"Do you, though?" Cartman asked, mischievously quirked an eyebrow.

Kyle huffed. "No. I did the stupid thing and fell in love with you," he complained.

Cartman just grinned impishly. "Yeah, irrevocably or whatever the hell Bella Swan says."

Kyle gave him a dry, unamused look and sighed heavily. "Is the Twilight thing going to be a central fixture in our relationship now?"

"Oh, without a doubt."

"Great."

Kyle resigned to the whole thing and kissed Cartman again as he wiggled the rest of the way out of his pants. He could still taste his own blood on his tongue and it made the kiss taste sweeter than it ever could have before. He didn't know why it took him so long to turn him in the first place.

Cartman groaned a little into the kiss as he lined their cocks up against each other, rocking his hips a little so that they rubbed together with immaculate friction. It seemed like he was getting a taste of the way vampirism made everything feel bigger and brighter and more intense in a way that made the bouts of unbearable thirst and bloodlust worth it sometimes.

"God, I need to be inside you," he said, his voice trembling with desperation.

"Here," Kyle said, sitting up a bit and leaning over to the nightstand. He grabbed the lube, which he had put there to prepare for the inevitable. He tossed it to Cartman. "I came ready for this."

"Damn, you sure did," Cartman said, grinning and flipping open the top of the tube. He squeezed out a sizable dollop into his hand and stroked it onto his cock, using the extra to coat Kyle's own cock with slickness and then to press two fingers into him to stretch him open a bit before the final act.

Kyle let his head fall back against the pillows as Cartman kneaded into him, his cock twitching when his thick fingers brushed up against his prostate. After a few moments of this, Cartman became too impatient to wait any longer and he pulled his fingers out with a wet pop. Without wasting any time, he lined his cock up against Kyle's hole. He pushed in slowly, with a long groan, his eyes locked on Kyle's, until he was the whole way in and his

balls were right up against the cleft of Kyle's ass. Kyle let out a broken gasp, grabbing Cartman's wrists where his hands were placed at his hips.

"Shit," Kyle moaned, "I'm never going to get tired of this."

"Fuck no, you won't," said Cartman, tensing his fingers as he gripped Kyle's hip, leaving indents in the cool skin. "I'm going to fuck you every day until the end of time and you're gonna love every goddamn second of it."

Kyle shifted his hips a little, desperate for friction, whining quietly. "Y-Yeah? I'm sure I'll fuck you too. I'll do it right now, actually, if you don't fucking *move* already!"

"Needy," Cartman teased. He lifted Kyle's ass up and pulled it up into his lap, sitting up on his knees with Kyle's back still pushed down against the pillows, watching him with keen and radiant green eyes. Cartman carefully started to rock back and forth into him, getting a feel for the way his nerves worked now, almost making him feel oversensitive already. He fell into a steady, deliberate pace, grunting softly each time he bottomed out inside him.

Kyle's hips jerked in time with Cartman's thrusts, a small cry escaping his lips repeatedly as well. Cartman consistently went deeper inside him than he thought possible, so much so that Kyle seemed to feel him in the pit of his stomach, especially in this position.

Cartman ran his hand across Kyle's stomach, pushing down slightly right where his cock was inside him, able to feel the outline of his cock there. Then he moved lower, his fingers trailing through the line of fuzzy, red hair that ran down from his bellybutton. Then his hand moved to Kyle's dick, still slick with lube. He squeezed it gently and pumped it slowly, matching up with each time he pushed into him.

Kyle scrunched his face up, eyes closed, for a second and then looked up at Cartman with urgent eyes. "Faster."

"Say please," Cartman taunted.

Kyle frowned. "No."

"Bitch," Cartman scoffed. He obliged, though, picking up the pace, moving both hands back down to Kyle's hips to hold him steady as he pounded into him. He panted and looked down at Kyle for confirmation. "Like that?"

Kyle nodded, bringing his own hand down to replace Cartman's on his cock. He licked his lips. "Uh-huh," he said. "Fuck. That's it."

Cartman's facade had shifted from cocky to blissed out and desperate. He watched Kyle on the bed beneath him like he was the most awe-inspiring thing he had ever seen. It was easy now for Kyle to break through the thousands of layers and walls and pretenses that Cartman constantly projected. Kyle was able to bring out the real, true Eric Cartman these days and, god, did he love him.

“God, Kyle, you feel so fucking good,” Cartman said, almost choked off. He shifted his position so that he was leaning over top of Kyle on the bed, one hand on either side of him, as Kyle wrapped his legs up and around his waist. “You’re so good. You’re fucking perfect.”

They moved together, fast and unyielding. And, despite everything, it was incredibly human. So much so that they had both seemed to forget about vampirism and killing and death because the only thing that mattered was that they were together and in love and nobody could take that away from them now.

They were, however, jostled back into the reality of superhuman vampire abilities, though, when Cartman attempted to hold onto the headboard of the bed for support, so he could fuck Kyle harder and faster and deeper than before, and it broke in half in his hands from his newfound and unchecked strength. He paused, looking at it in disbelief.

“Whoops.”

Kyle blinked and then shook his head. “Fuck it. Keep going.”

Cartman tossed the splintered wood aside and it clattered to the ground. “You don’t have to tell me twice.”

With that, he leaned down to kiss Kyle deeply, over and over, panting against his lips while he fucked him. The remainder of the headboard banged loudly into the wall over and over again and the box spring creaked in protest but neither of them cared.

Kyle loved it like this. He loved how big Cartman felt on top of him and he loved the way his cock rubbed against Cartman’s soft stomach for friction when he was this close, bearing down onto him. Even vampirism couldn’t make Cartman any less soft and his skin was still eternally supple and squishy and perfect. Everything about him was wide and thick and huge and Kyle was so weak for it.

Cartman nuzzled against the crook of Kyle’s neck, kissing the healed over place where he had bitten him a few minutes prior. “I. Love. You,” he said, each word coinciding with a deep thrust of his hip as he sped up, getting closer to orgasm, probably quicker than he would have liked but there was no way he was going to slow down now. He probably wouldn’t have been able to, even if he had tried. Not when Kyle folded under him like this and not when his body felt so alive despite his technical death. It was like he was on fire and electric all at once. This was everything.

Kyle cried out sharply when Cartman’s cock hit just the right place inside him and he clung desperately to his body, realizing how close he really was. In fact, he was right on the precipice, about to lose it entirely.

“Ah! Fuck! Eric! I love you!” he shouted, his words dissolving into one unsteady stream of desperate, babbling love confessions punctuated by broken, breathless cries as he came unraveled like a loose thread. “I love you! I love you! I love you, love you, loveyouloveyouloveyou...!”

They came together at the same time, Kyle whining and rutting his hips up against Cartman's stomach, spilling onto the both of them, and Cartman gasping and groaning against Kyle's lips as he filled him up. Once again, though, the hotel bed had been punished for this because Cartman tore holes in the mattress from his grip and Kyle had shredded a pillow with his claw-like fingernails during his orgasm. The two of them were quiet in the post-sex stillness, catching their breaths, downy feathers from the destroyed pillow floating down around them.

"Goddamn," Cartman panted. "Holy shit. Is this what it feels like all the time?"

Kyle nodded, blowing a feather and a stray lock of hair out of his eyes as he lay back. His chest rose and fell heavily and he stared up at the ceiling. "Yeah. What do you think?"

"It's fucking sweet," Cartman said, pulling out and rolling over onto his side, draping an arm over Kyle's stomach. He kissed him lazily and then looked around, just now noticing the feathers. "Damn, it looks like you exploded a duck in here."

Kyle snorted. "Yeah. My bad."

"Still a feral little monster," Cartman said, adoringly.

Kyle ran his fingers through the mess of cum on his stomach and then brought them to Cartman's lips. Cartman sucked them clean, his eyes dark and lustful and locked with Kyle's.

"You wanna go again?" Cartman asked, raising his eyebrows and running his lips softly across Kyle's fingertips.

"Maybe," said Kyle. He stretched and sat up a bit. "But, aren't you hungry?"

Cartman thought about it and, the more he did, the more empty he felt inside, despite the blood bags and despite drinking from Kyle's neck. He shrugged sheepishly. "Maybe. Kind of."

"Me too," Kyle said. "Obviously not as much as you but it's been a couple of days. Like I said, I went out and killed a rapist as soon as I got you to the hotel, but that only got me so far. We should start planning what we're going to do next. I think we should hit somewhere really big. Make a bloodbath out of it." He smiled sharply, his eyes sparkling excitedly.

Cartman had to return the expression. "Oh, so, like, date night. That's cute."

Kyle snorted. "Yeah, sure. It's like going out for dinner. Just couple things."

"Hmm," Cartman said, thinking. "Do they have a KKK in Canada? We could wipe some of those fuckers out at one of their pussy ass meetings."

"Maybe. I don't know. I'm sure they have neo-Nazi rallies we could light the fuck up," Kyle suggested.

"Man, that'll be fun. I can't wait," Cartman said, grinning, his new fangs jutting out against his bottom lip. "I wanna kill people with you all the time."

Kyle rolled over and got up, walking to the bathroom and cleaning himself up with a wet washcloth. He pulled on a clean pair of boxer briefs and leaned in the bathroom doorway, looking out at Cartman still lying in the messed up bed.

“We’re going to have to kill twice as many people now. That’s going to be twice as dangerous,” Kyle pointed out.

“Yeah, yeah,” said Cartman. “Whatever. We can handle it. We’ve handled it so far. Right?”

“True,” said Kyle. “Except for we almost got arrested and then you died. But you know. That’s handling it.” He walked over and sat back down on the bed, laying back diagonally with his head resting on Cartman’s stomach. “We’ve got this.”

“Yeah,” Cartman said, running his fingers through Kyle’s messy curls. They were both very quiet for a few minutes until Cartman spoke up again.

“Hey, do you wanna get married or something?” he asked, raising his eyebrows.

Kyle snapped his head over to look at him like he had grown two heads. “...Excuse me?”

Cartman shrugged, almost too nonchalantly for the circumstances. “Yeah. You know. I figure, if we’re going to be running around being gay and killing people for the rest of eternity, we might as well take it the rest of the way, right? Why not get married?”

Kyle was still incredulous, sitting up entirely on his knees. “You... We... I’m...?? Did you seriously just ask me to marry you after we fucked in a hotel room? Fifteen minutes after you became a vampire?!”

“Uh, yeah,” Cartman said. “Of course I did. Obviously I’m going to be most inclined to ever propose to you while you’re full of my cum. Don’t be dumb, Kyle.”

Kyle made a sound of disbelief. “You are... so incredibly stupid. First of all, we’re only eighteen...”

“We’re going to be eighteen forever!” Cartman countered.

“I mean! True! But!” Kyle sputtered. His face felt hot, like he was blushing even though he really couldn’t blush right now. “We never even decided to be boyfriends or whatever yet! Don’t you think that’s a little too fast?” he said, his voice a little too high-pitched.

“Hm. Yeah. That’s a little out of order,” Cartman said. He looked thoughtful for a minute before piping up again. “Hey, do you wanna be my boyfriend?”

“...Sure,” said Kyle, narrowing his eyes.

“Cool. Do you wanna get married?” Cartman asked again, raising his eyebrows suggestively.

“You don’t even have a ring! *I* don’t even have a ring!” Kyle exclaimed, throwing his hands up in the air, almost in exasperation.

“So I’ll get you a ring!”

“Yeah, get me a ring and then ask me again,” Kyle snorted.

“And then you’ll say yes?” Cartman asked.

Kyle tried his best, unsuccessfully, not to smile. Cartman was incredibly endearing even though he was being a little too forward at the time. “I’ll tell you I’ll think about it,” he said.

“Oh, sweet. I’ll take it,” Cartman said, grinning and grabbing Kyle around the waist, pulling him down on top of him for a kiss.

They kissed for a long while like that, slow and unhurried, until Kyle sat up, straddling Cartman’s hips.

“Come on,” he said. “Let’s figure out what we’re going to be doing tonight. There’s so much I want to show you.”

“You just wanna see me kill somebody,” said Cartman, smirking.

“Yeah, maybe,” said Kyle.

Cartman pulled him back down by the shoulders, kissing him again. “Okay. I’ll kill a hundred people for you, baby.”

“Be still, my beating heart,” Kyle said, feigning annoyance but leaning back down to press their lips together some more. Again, they kissed without rushing anything, just tasting each other and mapping out the other’s mouths for a long time. Because, really, why should they hurry?

They had all the time in the world.

THE END

Chapter End Notes

Holy shit. It's been forever but this fic is FINALLY DONE. Thank you guys so much for reading and for staning gay vampire Kyle with me for like a year. I especially wanna thank my homies @shortstackedcheesecake96 and @Monarch13 for being the best about giving me feedback and letting me bounce ideas off of them. Now, on to the next kyman fic lmao!

Edit: ALSO!! Someone super cool in a Discord server I'm in made this animatic based on the fic for my birthday back in April and you should all go watch it and like and

subscribe to them because it's SO COOL!!!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6SLxyd1WYA&list=LL&index=9&t=5s>

Works inspired by this one

[Bloodlust 2: Trouble in Transylvania](#) by [shortstackedcheesecake96](#)

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